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Center of
THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

Join our Conversation on Religious Experience

A phone-in with Amy Frykholm of the *Christian Century*
& scholars at the Center of Theological Inquiry

Wednesday, May 14, 2014

8:00 PM EST / 7:00 PM CST

With support from the John Templeton Foundation



Amy Frykholm



Stephen Pope



Colleen Shantz



Michael Spezio

We know more than ever about what goes on in our brains and bodies when people pray or meditate. Does our knowledge about these experiences tell us anything about God and the world?

Pastors and people of faith ask these questions, and so do the scholars at the Center of Theological Inquiry who are part of a yearlong interdisciplinary exploration of religious experience and moral identity.

Pastors and congregation members are invited to join this rich conversation on psychology, spirituality, and theology when Amy Frykholm talks with theologian Stephen Pope, biblical scholar Colleen Shantz, and psychologist Michael Spezio and takes your phone calls.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

To register for this free event, please go to <http://livewebcast.net/cti/051414>.

Registration is open until 12:00 PM EST on Monday, May 12, 2014.

Weep together

THE MIDDLE EAST peace talks appear to be at a dead end. At the last minute Israel reneged on a promise to release Palestinian prisoners and announced the construction of yet more housing in territory claimed by the Palestinians for a future state. The Palestinians responded by applying for membership in United Nations agencies—something both Israel and the United States have requested they not do. Each side blames the other for the failure of the peace process. Yet it does not seem that either side truly wants a resolution, even though the continuation of the status quo will lead to a disaster for both sides. In the meantime, most likely as an expression of frustration and desperation, the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement against Israel is gaining momentum.

Recently, in the space of a few days, the editorial staff of the CENTURY met with a Palestinian Christian leader and a Chicago rabbi who works for a major national Jewish organization. Both men are friends of mine, as well as distinguished clergy and respected leaders.

After engaging in conversation with them, I was struck once again by the conflicting narratives: how the same events in the same period of time and the same place sound entirely different depending on who's telling the story. It's somewhat like the American story—told one way by European settlers and their descendants and another way by Native Americans and their descendants.

One visitor represented the narrative of a people subjected to a millennium and a half of relentless persecution: expelled from homes, confined behind ghetto walls, and nearly obliterated in state-conducted genocide. Finally, with UN approval, they claimed a nation state in a place where their ancestors had lived centuries before. The other visitor's narrative was about a people who were violently displaced from their land and pushed into camps the size of cities—walled in, denied basic freedoms, and left at the mercy of their oppressors.

Isn't it possible for both narratives to be true and valid? Yes, Jews were and are victims of racial hatred and anti-Semitism. And yes, Palestinians were and are victims of the emergence of a Jewish state through wars and occupation.

Dialogue ends when each side demands that the other "let go of past suffering" and "get over it." To ask a Jew to "get over" the systematic slaughter of 6 million fellow Jews is callous. To ask a Palestinian to "get over" his ejection from his family home and the forcible displacement of 700,000 fellow Palestinians is also callous. Both narratives of suffering and oppression are true. Both people have been and are victims.

Is it too much to hope that somehow Jews and Palestinians could weep together? Is it too much to hope that both acknowledge their own culpability? Is it too much to ask the church of Jesus Christ to play an honest and hopeful role in the devilishly difficult and complex challenge of peacemaking?

To that end it would be helpful to declare a moratorium on hateful speech and loaded terms: apartheid, racism, the treatment of Palestinians as "a new crucifixion," Palestinian activists and patriots as "terrorists." It would also be helpful if churches, of all places, made every effort to be balanced and fair, recognizing the legitimacy of both narratives and trying not to place blame on one side or the other.

As Christopher Leighton says in this issue (p. 28), we must resist both "the messianic zealotry that animates Jewish settlers" and the "anti-Zionist ideologues who have jettisoned the role of peacemakers because they believe that Palestinians cannot win unless Israelis lose."

A few years ago the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) said the church should "avoid taking broad stands that simplify a complex situation into a caricature of reality" in which one side is clearly at fault and the other side is clearly a victim. It's sound advice.

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Photo by Matthew Roth.

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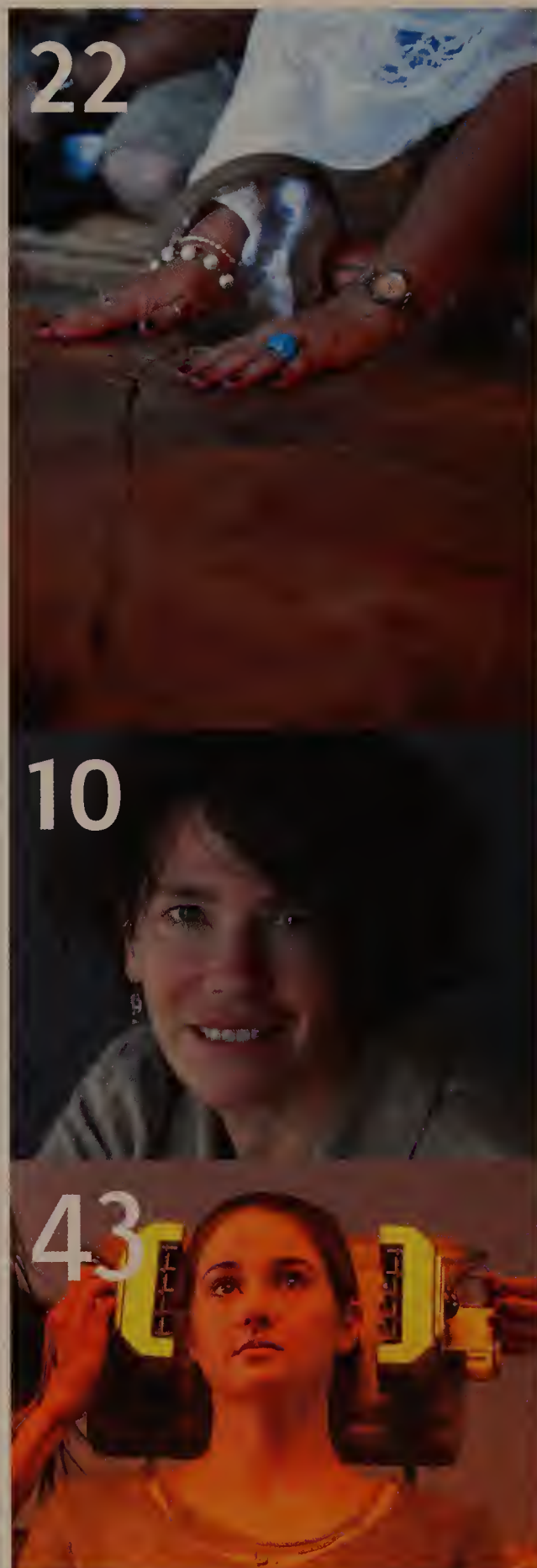
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To split or not to split

A growing international United Methodist Church offers two benefits that would be lost by a split in the UMC in the United States (“A time to split?” by Amy Frykholm, April 16).

First, the harsh antihomosexual laws in many countries with UM churches can be challenged by UM social teachings, even if UM churches are not fully open to LGBT Christians. Second, an international UMC that shares Wesleyan roots with Pentecostalism can contribute to what Philip Jenkins and others describe as a major challenge facing 21st-century Christianity: integrating Eurocentric traditional Christian churches and the already massive and growing global Pentecostalism.

*John M. Lurvey
Santa Fe, Calif.*

In catechism I learned about ceremonial law—“a law we don’t have to keep,” my father happily assured us, like worshiping on Saturday or not eating meat on Friday. Ceremonial law is not your normal kind of law. It gives us advice but not enforcement. We’re each in charge of this kind of law as it applies to us.

Maybe Methodists could simply treat the Book of Discipline as ceremonial law. This “law” serves much like a scaffold helps the house painter. It protects him—if only he wouldn’t forget to take the darn thing down when he’s finished.

Frank Schaefer said, as he was being tried for performing his calling: “This is insane! This is a church! What are we doing?” Thinking differently about law doesn’t solve any of the problems mentioned in Amy Frykholm’s fine article, but just think how much more prayer could do than trials.

*Paul Krueger
Auburn, Calif.*

I was shocked to read that Bishop Scott Jones “declared that if 100 clergy in his conference perform same-sex weddings, ‘then there will be 100 suspensions from ministry . . . followed by 100 trials.’” I was also saddened.

I am a retired United Methodist elder and have been involved in this controversial issue in our church since 1964. I have respected those with whom I disagreed, not just on this issue but other issues as well. I find it troubling that Bishop Jones is so certain that he is right—as certain as Saul, who was determined to drive followers of Jesus from the synagogues. We cannot be part of the solution until we accept ourselves as part of the problem.

*John V. Moore
San Diego, Calif.*

When a baseball pitcher catches a runner off base, the runner is caught “leaning the wrong way.” Reading Frykholm’s article on United Methodism’s possible schism, I wondered if it’s leaning the wrong way.

Pope Francis could lead us. He’s transforming the church by “leaning” the way Jesus did. The pope’s views on hot-button issues, however, appear relatively unchanged. His question “who am I to judge?” illuminates. He’s still concerned about controversial matters, but he’s more concerned about Christ’s fundamental issues. It’s time United Methodism learned from Pope Francis. Instead of leaning toward an issue Jesus ignored, we should lean toward the issues that dominated his ministry.

*William A. McCartney
Delaware, Ohio*

I am one of the UMC clergy who sincerely believe that it’s time to dissolve this marriage. I am tired of fighting. We can still work together to feed the hungry and heal the sick, but we who believe in a truly inclusive fellow-

ship need to move out so we can spread our arms wide in welcome to our LGBT brothers and sisters. The only productive debate, at this point, will be about how to divide the property.

*Dean Feldmeyer
christiancentury.org comment*

My frustration is that we cannot speak to each other with compassion on any subject related to homosexuality. When I hear the conversations, I hear one wing of the church saying we will lose members if we aren’t more inclusive, and I hear another wing saying if we are fully inclusive we will lose members.

When will the entire body search our scripture, tradition, reason, and experience and after prayer and thoughtful discussion debate this issue intelligently and decide to do the right thing because it’s the right thing, regardless of people leaving the church?

*Richard Denison
christiancentury.org comment*

Energy desperately needed for a struggling denomination to make disciples of Jesus is being drained by conflict. In California, for example, less than .002 percent of its residents are in United Methodist worship on any given Sunday. So the church finally comes to the “right” stand, only to find no church left standing.

Even so, a split is not inevitable. In the early 1980s, conservatives created the Mission Society for United Methodists as an alternative evangelical mission ministry. Today that group has more foreign missionaries in the field than the denomination. While a few conservatives left, the overwhelming majority did not, and they have worked with progressives for constructive change to the benefit of all.

*Robert J. Phillips
christiancentury.org comment*

Rwanda and after

May 14, 2014

Last month marked the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda. By many measures, Rwanda has rebounded remarkably in the years since mass killings left 800,000 dead. Its economy is strong and its poverty rate has declined. The government has brought order to the country and overseen a process of reconciliation involving international, national, and village trials.

On the international scene, Rwanda is a synonym for doing nothing in the face of genocide. The current U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, rose to prominence with an impassioned book lamenting world leaders' failure to intervene in 1994. Bill Clinton, president at the time, has expressed regret about his inaction. New Zealand recently apologized for its failure to act.

After 20 years—and now with someone like Power in a leadership role—is the international community any more likely to intervene when the next Rwanda looms? It's doubtful. Humanitarian intervention sounds good in moral theory but is frequently set aside in the political reckoning.

The situation in the Central African Republic may offer a test case. Rivalry there between Christians and Muslims has erupted into mass killings, torture, and rape. Officials in France and at the United Nations have warned that full-scale ethnic cleansing might break out. The UN Security Council has decided to send a 12,000-member peacekeeping force to the CAR, but it won't arrive until September. At present, a 2,000-strong French force has the nearly impossible task of keeping peace in a country the size of Texas. Will nations of the world intervene further to help a desperately poor country that has little strategic value? It will take unusual vigilance, cooperation, and courage on the part of Power and her colleagues.

The world has learned in recent years that the slogan "Never again" after a genocide does not necessarily mean never again. On a more hopeful note, however, the world has also learned something about the importance of the rule of law and about the need to assist developing nations with their systems of law enforcement. An explosion of violence that leads to genocide presents the world with a crisis that may or may not be handled well. Meanwhile, in between crises, people in the developing world suffer from violence every day.

Gary A. Haugen and Victor Boutros, authors of the recent book *The Locust Effect*, point out that throughout the developing world justice systems are often so dysfunctional that people have no defense against those who seek to rape, exploit, and assault them. Development specialists focus on providing food, water, and education—and these elements are vital. But even more basic are the daily efforts of police, courts, and prosecutors. If there's no policeman to call and no prosecutor to take your case, then you are at the mercy of your neighbor with the machete, and your entire life may be shrouded in fear and uncertainty.

Vigilance, cooperation, and courage by international leaders may prevent a genocide. Another way to do it is by helping train and support the everyday work of police, prosecutors, and judges.

Is intervention any more likely when the next genocide looms?

CENTURY marks

MEDAL OF HONOR: Few people remember that Ethiopian runner Lelisa Desisa won the 2013 Boston Marathon, in which four people were killed in a bombing at the finish line. But Desisa gained recognition in Boston last June when he gave his trophy to the city in memory of the dead and injured. He also presented his running bib to a dancer who lost her lower leg in the bombing and her husband, a veteran of the Afghanistan war, who was also injured. He said he would run in this year's marathon because "I want to show that I am not scared" (*New York Times*, April 17).

SECOND LIFE: When Judith Valente started making regular visits to a Benedictine women's monastery in Atchison, Kansas, she made friends with 90-year-old Sister Lillian Harrington. Valente asked Sister Lillian if she ever thinks of death. "I don't think about dying," she said. "I think about living." At 75, after retiring as a professor of speech and drama, Sister Lillian reinvented herself as the "pilgrim minister." She traveled to schools, parishes, and retreat centers where she dramatized Gospel passages and wisdom stories. She performed without notes or a script well into her

nineties. She died soon after celebrating her 96th birthday in March (RNS).

REAL WORLD: General Theological Seminary, in announcing a shift in its curriculum, issued an apology to the church for its past. Kurt H. Dunkle, dean and president, said the seminary was partly at fault for the decline of faithful members within the Episcopal Church and that the school's approach to education had alienated it from the local church. "We find that we can no longer articulate how our disparate disciplines and specialties hang together or offer to our students or supporters a cogent vision of theological education as a vital and essential aspect of the Church." Using the theme of wisdom as the core of a new curriculum, third-year students will shift from the classroom to the "real world." Students will be paid for working and learning in churches, and the classroom will be the locus of integrating theory and practice (*Living Church*, April 3).

POETIC THEOLOGY: When Michael Leach was in seminary he was introduced to the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, and he later concluded that poetry contains some of the best theology. The poet can do what Jesus did: look at what is temporal and discern what is eternal. The "poet also divines the divine in the most unlikely places," such as when Leach saw Christ in a "down-and-out man" who was leaning against a wall, drinking from a bottle in a bag. Poetry "imagines the unimaginable, describes the indefinable, and unveils what our senses cannot know or our intellect figure out," says Leach (*National Catholic Reporter*, March 25).

FAITH FACTORS: Americans have little difficulty accepting scientific conclu-



"How much speech did you take in last month?"

sions close to human experience—that smoking causes cancer, that mental illness is a disease that affects the brain, and that there is a genetic code inside our cells. Americans have greater difficulty accepting scientific conclusions farther from our experience—about the big bang, evolution, and global warming. Belief in a supreme being, church attendance, and evangelical convictions all contribute to doubt about the big bang, evolution, and global warming, according to an AP-GfK poll (AP).

THE FEW, THE WEALTHY: A few very wealthy individuals and interest groups are drowning out the voice of the populace, according to a recent study conducted by researchers at Princeton and Northwestern universities. They compared the public's influence on nearly 1,800 public policy issues between 1981 and 2002 and found that when 80 percent of the public asked for change of some sort, they got it only about 43 percent of the time. A few elites and interest groups representing businesses are setting the direction of the country, according to the study. The authors call for campaign reforms that limit the amount of money the wealthy can contribute and a lessening of the inequality between the super rich and the rest of the population (Aljazeera.com, April 16).

AMEND THE AMENDMENT: For over 200 years it was understood that the Second Amendment protects the right to keep and bear arms for military purposes. It limited the power of the federal government in that respect, but didn't limit the regulation of firearms by state or local governments. That understanding has changed, most dramatically in two 5-4 Supreme Court decisions, which protected a civilian's right to own a handgun in the home for self-defense and limited the right of the city of Chicago to outlaw handgun ownership by private citizens. To restore its earlier meaning, former associate justice John Paul Stevens is suggesting that five words be added to the Second Amendment: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep

“I believe we should be more confident about our status as a Christian country, more ambitious about expanding the role of faith-based organizations, and, frankly, more evangelical about a faith that compels us to get out there and make a difference to people's lives.”

— British prime minister **David Cameron** (RNS)

“My goodness, I didn't realize solid-waste management was so controversial.”

— **Hillary Clinton**, after a woman threw a shoe at her during a speech at the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries convention in Las Vegas (*Time*, April 28)

and bear Arms *when serving in the Militia* shall not be infringed (Stevens, *Six Amendments*, excerpted in the *Washington Post*, April 11).

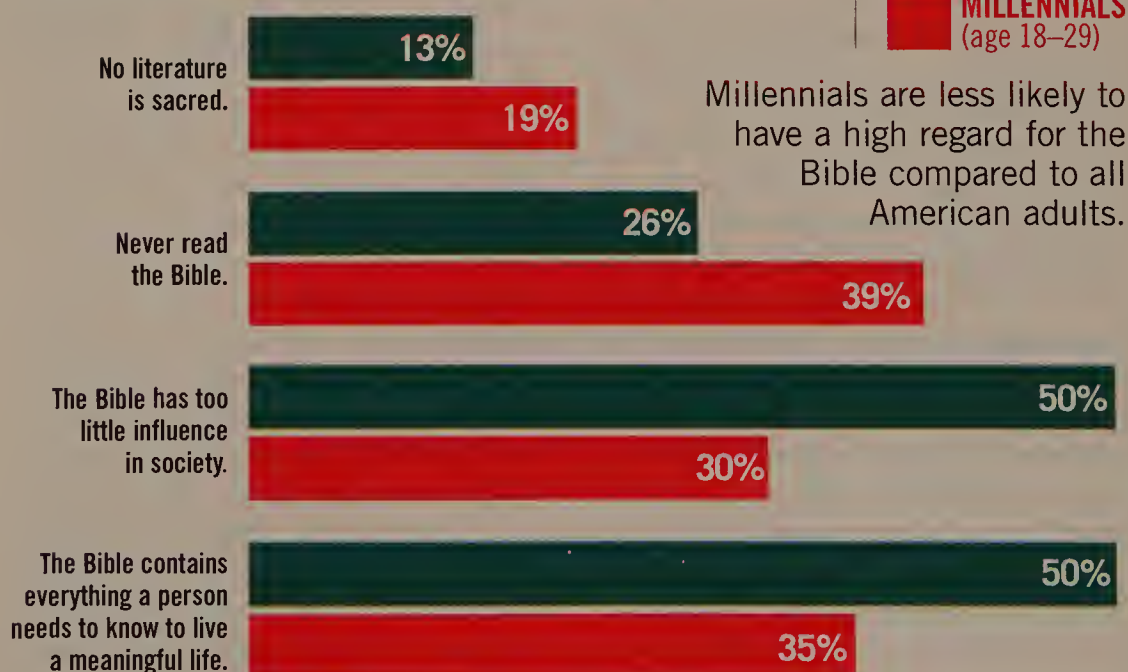
DRIFT: Despite Pope Francis's popularity, he's not been able to stem the movement of fellow Latin Americans away from Catholicism and toward evangelicalism. The number of Roman Catholics in Latin America dropped to 67 percent in 2013, from 80 percent in 1995. Still, around 78 percent of Catholic Latin Americans said they trusted the church—up from 69 percent in 2011. Sexual abuse scandals and the percep-

tion that it is out of touch are negative factors for the Catholic Church; vibrant sermons are part of what attracts Catholics to evangelicalism (Reuters).

PASSIONATE MISUNDERSTANDING:

A Good Friday passion play was called off after the Oxford (England) City Council said the sponsoring church failed to get the proper permit. The council acted on the presumption that the passion play was a live sex show. In a statement of apology, an official said, "At the time of processing the application, I did not appreciate that this was a religious event" (*Independent*, April 18).

BIBLE IN AMERICAN LIFE



SOURCE: AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY/BARNA GROUP

What happens when people pray?

TANYA LUHRMANN is best known for her 2012 book *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, which examines how evangelicals and charismatic Christians experience and communicate with God. A cultural anthropologist, Luhrmann has studied modern-day witches and the assumptions of modern psychiatrists. Her columns appear frequently in the *New York Times*.

How did you get interested in studying people's prayer lives?

My first project as a cultural anthropologist was studying well-educated middle-class people in London practicing what they called magic. They experienced divine presence; they saw and heard things. I was flabbergasted.

It turned out that many of the people involved in this practice were reading St. Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, and the techniques they were using were techniques of prayer.

Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* also come up in your book on charismatic Christianity.

The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* codify and make explicit a set of practices that are common in Christianity and in other faith traditions. Vineyard churches, for example, which want to enable people to find and experience God, have encouraged people to use practices that might be thought of as Catholic.

Ignatius ratchets up the use of the imagination by asking people to enter a particular biblical passage. I did this myself as part of the Vineyard church for about nine months. Each week, we were to spend an hour a day meditating on a passage. With the text on blind Bartimaeus, for example, we were told to won-

der: What does he look like? What is his cloak like? What does he smell like? Are you on the road? Part of the crowd? In a tree? Are you blind Bartimaeus yourself?

Ignatius asks participants to pay attention to their inner senses—to what they see and hear and smell and taste and touch in their minds. Ignatius says, "I don't care what the road actually looks like, if it is broad or narrow, if there is a hill or it is flat. I care that you experience something." These prayer experiences are very powerful.

What would you call a common prayer experience?

Three out of five Americans say they pray every day. The bulk of that prayer appears to be conversational. And people buy prayer manuals, like *The*

"Over the course of my research I have developed a sense of God. I am still learning about that."

Purpose Driven Life, for example, which are descriptions of talking to God in a conversational way.

Have your studies of religious people changed you?

When I started I was focused on whether God was or was not out there. Now I am much more comfortable with ambiguity. I hear people talking about God, and I hear that they are reaching for joy. That's a project you can get on board with.

I don't call myself a Christian because that statement has a meaning that is big-

ger and more dramatic than I feel comfortable making. People will ask, "Have you had a born-again experience?" No, I haven't had that experience. I grew up in what I would call a Christian family. I would say that over the course of this research I have developed a sense of God. I am still learning about that.

How did you come to write a regular column in the *New York Times*?

The editors at the *Times* think religion important, and my voice is different from many of those who speak about

religion in their pages. Some people are moved by my columns, some are outraged—such as when I wrote a column that was sympathetic to speaking in tongues.

How do people respond to your attempts to "explain" religious experience?

People's response to my work depends on whether they have the ability to get outside themselves and be curious about the experience of another human being. To entrenched nonbelievers, it seems I am trying to make imagined beings come to life. To believers, it seems

PHOTO BY MICHAEL LIONSTAR



I am reducing religion to psychology. I am trying to do neither.

Can you describe your recent research in Africa and India?

I've been comparing the experience of hearing God in Ghana, South India, and the San Francisco Bay Area. I am looking at churches in which people have somewhat similar understandings of God—that God is not only mighty, but intimately accessible, that God is authoritative, but also a person with whom you can have a relationship. These congregations are all English-speaking; they all have college-educated participants. A sermon that is given in one church could more or less be given in another.

In the American setting, where secularism is powerful, people have trouble experiencing God speaking back to them. They have trouble experiencing God's voice. In West Africa, the supernatural is intermingled with the material world in a way that is very concrete: God gives you money. God has an obligation to respond to you in a concrete way in the here and now. God is almost materially present. God speaks, and people hear. In Chennai, India, the divine or supernatural is still present, but it is much less tied to the material world. There is much less atheism in that context than in America, but the supernatural is less perceptibly real than in the African setting.

What might American clergy learn from your work?

The message for noncharismatic pastors might be that knowing God involves skill. This is not a comment on whether God is real or not real. It is a comment about the fact that you can train human capacities for knowing God. A Christian might say, "God is always speaking." But why do only some people hear? It might be that some people are paying attention in a way that allows them to hear God more clearly.

The message for charismatic pastors might be that not everyone can have an intimate conversation with God. About a quarter of the people I spoke to in charismatic churches found that difficult to have. **CC**

— Amy Frykholm

Christians and the conflict in South Sudan

Is the church helping?

by Ross Kane

ONLY TWO YEARS ago South Sudan was celebrating its independence from the repressive Sudan regime. After 20 years of civil war, a beleaguered yet hopeful people had overcome internal tensions to establish a new state. Churches helped usher in a new era of South Sudan state politics, encouraging participation in the independence referendum and educating South Sudanese on the particulars of voting.

But the spirit of celebration came to an abrupt halt in December 2013 when virulent and sudden violence broke out. At least 10,000 people died, and over 800,000 people were displaced. As the conflict continues, some Christians are resisting the violence while others are complicit in it.

At the center of the crisis are President Salva Kiir and former vice president Riek Machar, both former rebel leaders in Sudan's civil war. Both

men emerged in the 1980s as leaders of the South Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, which fought for southern autonomy from the largely Islamic northern Sudan government. In 1991 Machar, then a senior rebel commander, tried to oust Kiir and SSLM/A chair John Garang from power. When the coup failed, Machar formed his own movement, and brutal conflict ensued.

Raiding between Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups increased dramatically from small tit-for-tat battles to wholesale slaughters like the Bor massacre in 1991, in which a Nuer militia killed thousands and sent many more into the bush. Until then the Dinka and Nuer had always intermarried and shared extensive commercial ties, but now the ethnic markers became fixed and militarized.

Amid the violence of those years, the New Sudan Council of Churches initiated

a movement called People-to-People Peacemaking. The process brought together local elders and chiefs, church leaders, and rebel politicians to dialogue about past atrocities, seek restitution, and establish local governance systems to prevent further outbreaks of violence. The movement succeeded in large part because it involved not only rebel politicians but also indigenous kinship leaders who had more influence with many South Sudanese than did rebel politicians.

The process creatively adapted indigenous peace rituals like bull sacrifice with Christian practices of confession and forgiveness to stem the tide of ethnic violence. It led to the Wunlit peace con-

Ross Kane is a priest at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria, Virginia. He was a volunteer missionary in East Africa from 2002 to 2005 with the New Sudan Council of Churches.

ference in 1999, to the peaceful coexistence of Dinka and Nuer in large areas of South Sudan, to a more cohesive South, and to peace between northern and southern Sudan in 2005. When South Sudan became independent in 2011, churches continued their work of peace-making: the Sudan Council of Churches and Anglican archbishop Daniel Deng Bul started “Peace from the Roots,” which united church leaders and indigenous elders to lead dialogues for peace.

During Sudan’s civil war, Christianity grew substantially, in part because identification with Christianity was another way to resist northern Sudan. Conversion became a political act. As various rebel leaders split off from one another, pastors often followed suit, employing the trope of ethnicity to gain followers. Denominational boundaries that followed ethnic lines, left over from missions of the colonial era, only exacerbated conflict. These fissures continue to impact the present conflict.

In 2011, when the SSLM/A became

the ruling party in the government of South Sudan, a political crisis quickly spread across large parts of the country, with churches swept up in the tide. Violence broke out in the capital city of Juba in December 2013. President Kiir accused Machar of staging a coup and then imprisoned key politicians perceived to be part of the resistance. Powerful militias quickly joined Machar’s side. While Kiir and Machar both speak of transcending ethnic divisions, each manipulated ethnic sentiments to advance political and military aims. The Presidential Guard—largely Dinka—swept through residential districts around Juba, arbitrarily killing Nuer. Meanwhile Nuer militias stormed Dinka territories, stealing cattle and killing soldiers and civilians alike.

Each side has sought to capture as much territory as possible to increase its political advantages and to gain leverage in negotiations. Undisciplined military forces kill indiscriminately, forcing villagers to flee into the bush. Many towns are decimated as local control changes between government and rebel troops.

Again church leaders are seeking to be peacemakers and prophets. Dinka elders and church leaders are working together to encourage reconciliation among factions of the SSLM/A that were openly challenging one another. Catholic archbishop Paulino Lukudu criticized politicians for their failure to reconcile. When violence broke out, church leaders called for an immediate and unconditional end to hostilities—to no avail.

At the local level many Christians have graciously received refugees, held public prayer services for peace, and encouraged hope in weekly preaching. Anglican bishop Joseph Atem, for example, has worked with his local chief and sympathetic political authorities to halt potential outbreaks of violence in their hometown of Renk and to receive refugees from the nearby town of Malakal.

Church leaders have challenged politicians who instigated violence. In a Pastoral Exhortation in January 2014, Catholic bishops charged: “The blood of the innocent, in their thousands, cries out from the ground! The Lord will judge harshly those who continue to murder, rape and loot his innocent children, and even more harshly those who incite this violence and fail to prevent it in their greed for power.”

At the same time, however, other pastors are exacerbating local conflicts. One pastor laments, “Many church leaders are dividing along tribal lines instead of taking up their mantle of peacemaking and reconciliation.” Both Kiir and Machar identify themselves as Christians—Kiir as Catholic, Machar as Presbyterian; some pastors are all too happy to support these politicians in order to gain political and religious prestige.

The church’s ultimate response to the conflict depends on how it navigates its three roles of peacemaker, prophet, and collaborator. The brutalities of the ’90s and its contemporary legacies reveal, on the one hand, that undue accommodation to political movements leads churches to mimic ethnic divisions. On the other hand, the church’s work in peacemaking and prophetic witness shows that it has remarkable resources at its disposal which can help heal the divisions of South Sudan.

Lazarus

Perhaps you are perplexed to determine how two such disparate stories could be told about me. But the truth hides somewhere between and beyond these accounts—I was neither a poor beggar nor a wealthy intimate of God’s Son.

If in these tales I appear as a mere prop—a passive player in parables concerned with actors who wielded some form of genuine power—thus far you may credit each tale: I had no voice. Dumb from birth, the real miracle for me would have been to speak.

And yet this never seemed to me a curse or even a lack—I grew to love my silence, and in my early years I was thought to be simply shy as my maternal sisters supplied my voice in public encounters. Indeed, their ready reading of my intent was all the miracle I craved.

I neither anticipated nor needed any return from the grave—that was about his need, his purpose, not mine. And to be enfolded in the arms of Abraham like some Isaac or Ishmael, my sight simply a torment to some rich fool—what is that to me? To you?

Samuel Smith

Resurrection by inches

by Heidi Neumark

IT'S BEEN seven years since the washcloth incident, but my regret is still fresh. My mother moved in with us—my husband, son, and me—when her Parkinson's disease had made it impossible for her to live alone. We wanted her to stay with us as long as possible, so we managed to juggle our schedules with the needs of an aging parent, and when her health went downhill we were able to pay for help, thanks to the sale of her house. My mother knew who we were until her final night, and there was some comfort in that thought. But I, on the other hand, have not found comfort. I can't forget that washcloth.

It was several months before her death, and the day had not begun well. I made the mistake of checking my e-mail before praying and thus began the morning with an angry message from someone who had been excluded from a church e-mail. Instead of drinking coffee, I was cleaning up spilled urine that would not have spilled if I had emptied the commode the previous night instead of letting it wait until the morning when liquid sloshed over the top. Finally I went to take a shower up on the third floor where our bedroom is.

At last I was refreshed and ready to start the day again. I was clean, the floor was clean, and the e-mail was sort of cleaned. But my mother was not. She asked me for a washcloth, which was back up on the third floor. Some people have to struggle to get an elderly parent to wash. Mine was reasonably asking for a washcloth. But she might as well have been telling me to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. I couldn't do it. I was already late, and the fact that this additional task was expected of me made me suddenly furious. I knew that my fury was misplaced, but I was helpless before it. If I were anyone else, I would offer absolution. But it's been seven years, and I cannot

access the word of peace. The tears still sting and slosh over my pail of remorse.

I know that if she could, my mother would grab that pail and toss it out the window. She would forgive me; in fact, I believe she has forgiven me. But in a way, that makes it harder. Knowing of her unfailing love and grace makes me feel worse about my own failure. Of course, I am envisioning her at her very best, now in heaven knowing as she is known and seeing me with the eyes of God, and I am

that as true, then it seems that regret should not linger. But in my experience, forgiveness has not erased regret. Not yet anyway.

These post-Easter days, I am thinking that if my mind and heart are not yet in sync with what should be—with sin removed to a distance beyond my reach—perhaps mere inches matter. We might envision regret like the giant stone that sits at the mouth of the tomb. The stone is rolled aside, not away. It's still there, inches from the entrance, but it's not blocking anyone's resurrection. The


Does divine forgiveness erase our regret or increase it?

remembering myself at one of my lowest moments. What about God's forgiveness? God is always in a best moment and ever aware of our worst. Does that divine forgiveness erase our regret or increase it?

Jesus' first word to the disciples on the other side of the locked doors is *peace*. I imagine myself in that room, staring at his wounds and accepting the resurrection miracle. I imagine embracing the improbable, exciting mission commanded to me in the words that follow. But peace? Peace is another story.

After Jesus called Peter to feed his sheep, did Peter ever think back on that day around the charcoal fire when he denied the one he dearly loved? Did Peter remember when Jesus yelled at him and called him a terrible name? When Peter stood to preach on Pentecost and 3,000 were baptized in one day, did he go home and lie awake wishing he could take back his actions on another day? According to the psalm, our transgressions are removed "as far as the east is from the west." If we accept

stone that's rolled aside allows for feeding sheep, baptisms, and hopeful love of every kind. The Easter angel does not make the stone magically disappear. In Matthew, the angel of the Lord rolls back the stone and sits on it, preventing it from impeding us. It's still there, heavy as a regretful heart can be, but it's not blocking anyone's way forward.

I find some comfort in noticing that Easter seems to have come in inches for the disciples as well. A week after that first word of peace they are back behind the same closed doors. It seems that they have scarcely moved at all. But there is nothing solid to hinder them, and soon they will head out. After my own week of years, I hope to do the same—to leave the washcloth behind with the old grave clothes and inch my way forward in the light of Easter. And when I pause to consider that familiar stone, my eyes will be drawn instead to the bright robes of the angel who keeps the stone in its place. 

Heidi Neumark is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church of Manhattan.

Lobbying for Bible classes

The Mustang, Oklahoma, school board has voted to adopt a Bible course developed by Steve Green, clearing the way for the Hobby Lobby president—whose suit against the Affordable Care Act is currently before the U.S. Supreme Court—to enter a contested arena at the borderline of church and state.

The board, whose district is practically in Hobby Lobby's Oklahoma City backyard, agreed April 14 to test the first year of the Museum of the Bible curriculum, an ambitious four-year public school elective on the narrative, history, and impact of the Bible.

For at least the first semester of the 2014-15 year, Mustang alone will use the program, said Jerry Pattengale, head of the Green Scholars Initiative, which is overseeing its development. In September 2016, he hopes to place it in at least 100 high schools; by the following year, "thousands."

If successful, Green, whose family's wealth is estimated at upward of \$3 billion, would galvanize the movement to teach the Bible academically in public schools. The movement was born after the Supreme Court banned school-sanctioned devotion in the 1960s.

The Green curriculum "is like nothing we've seen before," said Charles Haynes, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center and editor of a booklet sent out to all schools by the U.S. Department of Education in 2000 on teaching religion in public schools. "It's unique in its ambition and its scope and its use of the latest technologies. I think school districts far from Oklahoma will take note."

So will civil libertarians. In an award acceptance speech last April before the National Bible Association, Green ex-

plained that his goals for a high school curriculum were to show that the Bible is true, that it's good, and that its impact, "whether [upon] our government, education, science, art, literature, family . . . when we apply it to our lives in all aspects of our life, that it has been good."

If realized, these sentiments, although shared by millions of Americans, could conflict with the court's requirement that public school treatment of the Bible be taught in a secular, academic fashion.

In the same speech, Green expressed hope that such courses would become mandatory, whereas now they are usually elective.

Green's move into public school curricula grew out of his plans to erect a 430,000-square-foot museum of the Bible, due to open in 2017 several blocks from the National Mall in Washington, D.C., which will feature objects from his family's 44,000-piece collection of biblical artifacts.

A little over a year ago, said Pattengale, the realization that a high school curriculum could "help millions of students worldwide" understand the Bible's importance came to seem even more pressing than the museum. Having created an international network of scholars to assist the museum, Pattengale led a crash initiative on the curriculum.



GREEN AGENDAS: Billionaire Steve Green (shown here) and his family met Pope Francis at the Vatican on March 31. The week before, Green's company, Hobby Lobby, took its challenge to Obama's contraception mandate to the Supreme Court. Green has been urging school boards to allow Bible courses in classrooms.

He describes the first year of work, which took the project only to its quarter-way mark, as a multimillion-dollar effort involving more than 170 people. "It will never recuperate its expenses," he said, but "there's no desire to make money."

He describes the program as "robustly unique." It divides its topic into three areas: the Bible's narrative, the history of its composition and reception, and its impact on human civilization. The spine of the first-year program is a 400-plus-page book (the only text completed so far), currently spiral-bound, featuring 108 chapters divided into five-day-a-week lessons.

The book links to a dizzying array of state-of-the-art digital enhancements (Pattengale counts 550), including illustrations that "come alive" as video on the screen of a smartphone, original lectures by Green Collection scholars, clips from the Mark Burnett/Roma Downey miniseries *The Bible*, and deep digital access to the Green's biblical collection.

Asked to describe a typical chapter, Pattengale (who also serves on the Religion News Service managing board) outlined a "narrative" segment on creation that includes a summary of the Bible account; a section on how subsequent scientific discoveries relate to what the Bible says; and a consideration of key reasons for why it was written.

A sidebar called "Are People Created Equal?" explores the book of Genesis influence on that idea through history, including the famous phrase from the Declaration of Independence.

Contrary to popular assumptions, there is nothing unconstitutional about teaching about the Bible in public schools. The same Supreme Court ruling that outlawed school-sanctioned prayer in 1963 said that "nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible . . . when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment."

The key words, of course, are *objectively* and *secular*. Haynes suggested that "the bar is actually low—I think it's hard for judges to get beyond the surface to questions of what a sound academic course looks like—but much more difficult to develop materials that actually

both reflect constitutional principles and are academically solid."

Southern Methodist University's Bible scholar Mark Chancey noted: "The devil is in the details" of each plan.

Of his boss's 2013 speech, Pattengale said: "The curriculum may or may not espouse those views. The last people [Green] wanted to hire were scholars who would embellish the facts to support his religious position." A chapter with the title "How Do We Know that the Bible's Historical Narratives Are Reliable?" will include diagrams charting the commonality of multidisciplinary scholarly findings with the biblical account—or the lack of such commonality, he said.

Green could not have asked for a more sympathetic research partner than the city of Mustang. Religious observance in the Oklahoma City bedroom community is largely Christian, and the majority of Christians are, like Green, Southern Baptist. The two nearest synagogues are populated with Messianic Jews who believe in Jesus.

In 2005, when a previous school superintendent canceled the schools' annual Christmas pageant because of concerns over the separation of church and state, voters rejected a proposed school bond.

The Greens are a local employer—Hobby Lobby corporate headquarters are just five miles east on Oklahoma Highway 152.

Said Brady Henderson, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma: "We don't like their Supreme Court brief, but they do give a lot to the community. They treat their employees better than a lot of service industries."

The vote on April 14 was four yeas and one abstention. One former pastor spoke out against adopting the curriculum, citing the innate difficulty of finding common language about the Bible.

Abstaining board member Jeff Landrith grumbled that the community had not had enough time to review curriculum. Board president Chad Fulton responded that it would be available shortly for examination.

Soon many will have a chance to assess it. —David Van Biema, RNS

Evangelical support for Israel slipping?

American evangelicals have played a significant role in U.S. support for Israel; by some measures they are even more supportive than American Jews.

But in the spring issue of *Middle East Quarterly*, David Brog, executive director of Christians United for Israel, in a piece titled "The End of Evangelical Support for Israel?" wrote that evangelicals have shifted within the last decade and are no longer considered automatic supporters of Israel.

"The days of taking evangelical support for Israel for granted are over," he wrote, suggesting an urgency for those who take the issue seriously. "They cannot let the evangelical community go the way of the mainstream Protestant leadership."

Several mainline churches and international church bodies have passed resolutions on divesting money or boycotting products made in Israel because of its occupation of the Palestinian territories.

In October 2010, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life conducted a survey of evangelical leaders attending the global evangelical conference in Cape Town, South Africa.

Overall, 48 percent of the evangelicals said Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy about the second coming of Jesus, while 42 percent said it is not. When asked where their sympathies lay, 34 percent of global evangelicals surveyed sympathized with Israel, compared with 30 percent of American evangelicals.

In addition, new films made by Christians are beginning to question support for Israel. They include *With God on Our Side* (Rooftop Productions, 2010) and *Little Town of Bethlehem* (Ethno-Graphic Media, 2010), funded by Mart Green, the son of Hobby Lobby's founder, David Green.

Mart Green is the current chair of Oral Roberts University in Oklahoma, whose president, Billy Wilson, spoke at the recent controversial conference Christ at the Checkpoint.

Christ at the Checkpoint began in

2010 as a biennial conference with a theme centered on Jesus as a Palestinian who could be suffering under Israeli occupation today as he once suffered under Roman occupation.

David Neff, who co-convenes an annual evangelical-Jewish leader dialogue, said his Jewish friends have expressed some nervousness over recent gatherings and activities, including Christ at the Checkpoint, which took place in March.

Evidence of a shift in view is “more anecdotal at this point,” said Neff, who noted that some prominent evangelicals, such as Tony Campolo and Lynne Hybels, wife of megachurch pastor Bill Hybels, have gotten attention for their expressed sympathies for the plight of Palestinians.

In 2012, Lynne Hybels was invited to give an address on peacemaking in Israel/Palestine at Catalyst, one of the largest young evangelical gatherings in the country. She went on a trip to Palestine with Cameron Strang, the editor of *Relevant* magazine and son of Steve Strang, editor of *Charisma* magazine, which has been a strong supporter of Israel. *Relevant*’s March/April cover story, “Is Peace Possible?” by Cameron Strang, is on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. In 2012, popular author and blogger Donald Miller wrote “The Painful Truth about the Situation in Israel.”

It’s difficult to measure long-term support for Israel among evangelicals. Findings from the Pew Research Center, though, suggest that it has remained relatively stable in the past five years.

When asked “In the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, who do you sympathize with more?” evangelicals were far more likely to say Israel—72 percent to 4 percent in 2013, about the same as in 2009, according to the Pew poll.

“There’s deep attachment to Israel,

and I don’t see that changing,” said Todd Deatherage, executive director of Telos, a group that seeks a middle way that supports peace. “Anecdotally, it’s not that some Americans and some evangelicals are in any way becoming anti-Israel, but they’re defining their support in terms of conflict resolution.”



COURTESY OF LYNNE HYBELS

Lynne Hybels

For years, the source of that attachment was a specific, literalistic approach to biblical prophecy, called dispensationalism. Dispensationalists believe that the Israelites’ return to the Promised Land is a requirement for the second coming of Jesus. They therefore rejoiced when Israeli troops captured the Old City of Jerusalem from Arab forces in June 1967 and saw it as a sign that Jesus was coming.

Before he switched his theological views, California-based pastor Kim Riddlebarger sold Bible prophecy books for 25 years. Now Riddlebarger, who co-hosts a popular radio show called *White Horse Inn*, believes that God has fulfilled his promise to Israel through a covenant with Jesus, so he sees no theological need for a state of Israel.



COURTESY OF MERCER UNIVERSITY

David Gushee

“Reformed folks tend not to be involved in punditry, date setting, but more the theological discussion on Israel’s role in international politics and human rights,” Riddlebarger said. “You can only hype something so many times before people start to lose interest.”

David Gushee, Christian ethicist at Mercer University, said he sees more tourist trips to the region wanting to include a Palestinian perspective.

“The Palestinian side of the story is coming into view in the way it hasn’t before,” he said. “As people are organizing their mental worlds theologically, whatever they’re reading, it doesn’t equal unequivocal support for Israel at any given point.”

While support for Israel may look dif-

ferent than it did in previous years, Jews for Jesus director David Brickner said he hasn’t seen a decline in support among the Christians he meets at colleges, churches, and seminaries.

“If there’s a concern, it’s a younger generation that seems yet to have made strong conclusions whether or not to support Israel,” he said.

Still, he said, some Christians are grappling with how to handle Israel’s relationship with Palestinians.

“I long to see the church have a balanced perspective on the Middle East, where you don’t have to throw out the concern for Palestinians to support Israel,” Brickner said. “I really believe there’s a large middle ground, but it’s hard . . . when people are in their polar positions.” —Sarah Pulliam Bailey, RNS

Muslims cheer shutdown of NYPD spying unit

Muslim and civil rights groups welcomed the news that the New York City Police Department’s Demographics Unit will disband but said they still fear they may be targets of warrantless surveillance.

Muslim Advocates filed a lawsuit in 2012 to stop the program, and the group was later joined by the Center for Constitutional Rights.

“We need to hear from the mayor and NYPD officials that the policy itself has been ended and that the department will no longer apply mass surveillance or other forms of biased and predatory policing to any faith-based community,” said Ryan Mahoney, president of another Muslim civil rights group, the New York chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

The controversial unit was established in 2003 and uncovered by the Associated Press in 2011. Lawyers contend that since the unit’s inception, the NYPD has spied on at least 20 mosques, 14 restaurants, 11 retail stores, two Muslim elementary schools, and two Muslim Student Association chapters on college campuses in New Jersey. Forms of monitoring include video surveillance, photographing, and community mapping.

Lawyers said internal NYPD documents included a list of 28 “ancestries of interest” and policies showing that officers based their spying on the ethnic and religious background of their targets.

Former NYPD police chief Ray Kelly defended the spying as a critical tool in the battle against terrorism, but critics charged that the NYPD violated the constitutional rights of Muslims by profiling them based on their religion and said the program never produced a single lead.

Muslims in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, where the spying took place, said the program intimidated Muslims from attending mosques, speaking in public, and making contributions to Muslim charities.

In February, a federal judge in New Jersey dismissed a lawsuit over the department’s surveillance, saying Muslims could not prove they were harmed by the tactics. But Muslim Advocates and the Center for Constitutional Rights appealed the judge’s ruling.

A Muslim Advocates spokeswoman said that the NYPD decision does not affect the lawsuit and that it will move forward. The lawsuit demands that the NYPD stop the program and that the department expunge all records of the plaintiffs collected through the program. —Omar Sacirbey, RNS

Debates linger after tests on ‘Jesus’ wife’ papyrus

A year and a half after unveiling a slip of papyrus that she dubbed “The Gospel of Jesus’s Wife,” Harvard biblical scholar Karen King has released the results of long-delayed testing on the controversial fragment which appear to show that it is not a modern forgery.

Questions remain, however, with some experts still wondering whether it is a fake and others doubting the value of the tests.

King said she feels vindicated because the tests show that the fragment, which is about the size of a business card, and the writing on it are ancient and therefore authentic.

“I’m hoping now that we can turn away from the question of forgery and



‘MY WIFE’: Researchers say the tiny fragment of papyrus is not a modern fake, and Harvard scholar Karen King suggests that Jesus’ reference to “my wife,” his mother, and a woman named Mary offers fresh evidence that some early followers debated whether women could serve as disciples or missionaries.

talk much, much more about the historical significance of the fragment and precisely how it fits into the history of Christianity and questions about family and marriage and sexuality and Jesus,” King told reporters on April 10.

Possible theological implications stirred controversy after King presented the fragment at a conference in Rome in September 2012 and continued to do so in the wake of this latest announcement.

“Nearly every scholar believes that Jesus was unmarried. So do I,” said James Martin, a Jesuit priest and author of a new book on Jesus. “My faith,” Martin added, “does not rest on his being unmarried—but my reason tells me that he was.”

For example, Martin said, it would be odd for accounts of his life not to mention a wife if he had one, and the newly discovered papyrus was written well after the canonical Gospels.

The fragment, written in Coptic, consists of just eight lines and 33 words of an interrupted conversation, likely snipped from a larger papyrus.

At two points Jesus speaks of his mother, his wife, and a female disciple, one of whom may be identified as “Mary.” When the disciples discuss whether Mary is worthy, Jesus states that “she can be my disciple.”

A similar rivalry between a Mary and other disciples, especially Peter, is

reflected in at least two other apocryphal gospels, the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary, with the latter text favoring the woman follower.

King has stressed that the recently tested fragment does not indicate that Jesus was married, and she says the text is not in fact focused on that issue.

“The main topic of the fragment is to affirm that women who are mothers and wives can be disciples of Jesus—a topic that was hotly debated in early Christianity as celibate virginity increasingly became highly valued,” explained King, an authority on apocryphal writings.

Not everyone was satisfied with the latest findings on the papyrus.

“The papyrus fragment seems ripe for a Monty Python sketch,” Leo Depuydt, an Egyptologist at Brown University, wrote in a blistering rebuttal to King. His analysis appears in the new edition of the *Harvard Theological Review*. Depuydt also maintains that the Coptic language used in the papyrus contains “a couple of fatal grammatical blunders” that render it “patently fake.”

Critics point to other issues:

- The testing indicates that the papyrus could be as recent as 859, which is 400 years later than King first thought and much later than the accounts from the New Testament.

- Tests on the composition of the ink showed that it was of a type used

between 400 BC and as late as AD 800, a very wide window.

- While the ink appears to be of a type and pattern used by ancient writers, the ink itself could not be tested without destroying the papyrus.

- The language Jesus uses about a wife could be metaphorical and may indicate he was referring to the church as his bride, not a real woman.

Speaking to reporters, King acknowledged those criticisms but said they did not affect the validity or import of the fragment. She said the later dating did not matter too much because she has always believed the writing was copied from a much earlier document, probably from the second or third century. She said an analysis of the writing showed it falls in the range of the papyrus itself, and she said there are other examples of similar grammatical errors in other ancient writings.

“There’s a limited amount of take-away you can do from something that small,” she said.

King also acknowledged that the uncertain sourcing of the document was unfortunate but could not be helped. The anonymous owner of the fragment told her only that he bought it and five other papyri in 1999 from a collector who said he acquired them in what was then communist East Germany in 1963.

King said that Harvard Divinity School has the papyrus and that over the weekend the owner—who will not reveal his identity—wrote her an e-mail proposing that it remain there on permanent loan. Harvard is considering the idea, she said.

King said she was still surprised at the public fascination with the topic. Her original research article on the fragment was put on hold, as was a Smithsonian

Channel documentary, which will now air with updated information.

“My intent from the beginning was to do this in a responsible way,” King said. But, she continued, “I’m not sure it [the controversy] could have been avoided, actually.”
—David Gibson, RNS/added sources

More say Good Book is not a God book

Bible films may be raking it in at the box office, but fewer people are reading the original and taking it seriously.

The American Bible Society’s latest State of the Bible survey documents steep skepticism that the Good Book is a God book.

“We are seeing an incredible change in just a few years’ time,” said Roy Peterson, president of the society.

Most favor generic prayer for public meetings

THE U.S. SUPREME COURT will soon rule on the constitutionality of prayer at governmental meetings. A new survey finds that U.S. voters clearly favor such prayer—as long as the prayer is generic and not specifically Christian.

Fairleigh Dickinson University’s PublicMind survey asked about attitudes on high-profile cases before the court, including *Greece v. Galloway*. That case addresses whether elected officials can open public meetings with religiously specific prayers, such as praying in Jesus’ name.

A Jew and an atheist brought suit in Greece, New York, saying the Christian prayers excluded many citizens and violated the Constitution, which bans government establishment of religion. Even when the town began inviting non-Christians to give invocations, the “establishment” issue remained a question.

Greece officials “were trying their best not to offend anyone by making prayers as generic as possible. In this survey we asked if this is an acceptable way to approach the problem.

Three in four people said yes,” said Peter Woolley, professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson in New Jersey.

Most registered voters (73 percent) said that “prayer at public meetings is fine as long as the public officials are not favoring some beliefs over others.” And 23 percent said “public meetings shouldn’t have any prayers at all because prayers by definition suggest one belief or another.”

The key, however, is that this case centers on generic prayer that is “harmless, if not uplifting,” said Woolley. “Americans have become more used to the idea that one denomination is not necessarily privileged over another. Even unbelievers—atheists who would say prayer ‘is not for me’—approved” of allowing nonspecific prayer.

Among those who attend religious services (aside from funerals or weddings) at least once or twice a month, 86 percent would allow prayer, 11 percent would not.

For those who attend services a few times a year, 73 percent support it, but

opposition doubles to 26 percent. Even those who seldom or never go to church backed the prayers at public meetings, with 58 percent approving and 36 percent opposing.

Surveys continually find prayer in general—not specified by denominational distinctions—is hugely popular.

Gallup, Barna Research, and Pew Research Center all find that about eight in ten Christians (Catholics, Protestants, and Mormons) say they pray at least weekly, as do Muslims and Hindus.

But there still remains a vocal minority of people who oppose having officials call on God before calling a public meeting to order. The Freedom from Religion Foundation, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Americans United for Separation of Church and State often send letters to legislators and public officials relaying citizen complaints and asking them to drop the prayer practices. The FFRF view is that “government prayer is unnecessary, inappropriate, and divisive.” —Cathly Lynn Grossman, RNS

The study, conducted annually by Barna Research, finds:

- The most “engaged” readers—who read the Bible almost daily and see it as sacred—are now matched by “skeptics” who say it’s just a book of stories and advice. Both groups measured 19 percent.

- While the number of engaged stayed steady, the number of skeptics grew by 10 percentage points since the same survey was conducted in 2011.

- Skeptics cut into the number of adults Barna calls “Bible friendly,” those who read the Bible occasionally and see it as inspired by God. The “friendly” demographic fell to 37 percent, down from 45 percent in 2011.

- The percentage of people who view the Bible as sacred has dropped to 79 percent, down from 86 percent in 2011.

The study is based on 2,036 interviews with U.S. adults in January and February.

Peterson told RNS that the statistics are “sobering but not discouraging.”

The key, he said, is “adjusting our outreach” to reel in the next generation. Millennials, ages 18 to 29, lead the skeptics tally:

- 64 percent of them say the Bible is sacred literature, compared with 79 percent of all adults.

- 35 percent say the Bible offers “everything a person needs to know to lead a meaningful life,” compared with half of all adults.

- 39 percent of millennials admit they never read the Bible, compared with 26 percent of adults as a whole.

“We have to find where they are hurting, what questions millennials are asking,” he said.

The ABS has already started down that road by creating Bible-reading “journeys” to meet people’s needs, he said. On its website, people can key in a word such as *hope*, *parenting*, *job loss*, or *loneliness* and be steered to a seven- or ten- or 40-day journey of scripture selections designed to address that concern.

There are already more than 90 topics listed, he said, and “we are adding more strategic journeys every day. We’re being invited to youth conferences as a scripture partner. So we take it as a very urgent mission.” —Cathy Lynn Grossman, RNS

Chick-fil-A offers a new public face

CHICK-FIL-A IS crossing the road. The iconic chicken chain, known for its conservative heritage as well as its savory eats, is recalibrating its moral and culinary compass. It wants to go from old school to almost cool.

It wants to evolve from a place gays once picketed to a place where they’ll feel comfortable going to eat. It wants to broaden the brand as it expands nationally and plows into the urban arena, driven by the millennial generation.

Above all it wants to be a serious player on fast food’s biggest stage.

CEO Dan Cathy’s comments condemning gay marriage in 2012 set off store picketing and a social media firestorm. Now he has backed away from such public pronouncements that mix personal opinion on social issues with corporate policy.

“All of us become more wise as time goes by,” he said, apologetically. “We sincerely care about all people.”

While Cathy’s comments didn’t hurt short-term business—and even helped it—Chick-fil-A executives recognize they may have done longer-term damage to the brand’s image at the very time it was eyeing major growth outside the South.

The national growth is going into overdrive. Its biggest ever new product rollout is a grilled chicken line for which the company has spent the past 12 years testing more than 1,000 grilled chicken recipes.

Chick-fil-A—whose food has been long regarded as extra savory but nutritionally naughty—has an ultimate aim of improving its brand image with trend-setting millennials.

It announced plans in March to sell only antibiotic-free chicken within five years. It’s testing the removal of high-fructose corn syrup from all dressings and sauces and artificial ingredients from its bun.

The once tiny regional chain just surpassed giant KFC to become the nation’s

largest chicken chain in domestic sales. Along with increasing sales and geographical growth has come a new social consciousness.

That’s not by accident, said Christopher Muller, professor of hospitality at Boston University. “The politics of their Southern Baptist values will not transcend their core markets,” he said.

Chick-fil-A’s socially conservative agenda, which formerly led the company to donate millions to charitable groups opposed to gay marriage, has been tempered as the company aims to expand into Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles.

If nothing else, Cathy has listened. In 2012, Cathy not only heard from some unhappy consumers about his comments against gay marriage but also from some

store operators and employees. Now, he said, “I’m going to leave it to politicians and others to discuss social issues.”

One past critic has even become an unlikely fan. “Dan and I have an ongoing friendship,” said Shane Windmeyer, executive director of the gay rights advocacy group Campus Pride. “I am

appreciative for the common ground we have established in treating all people with dignity and respect—including LGBT people.”

Which means Chick-fil-A can focus on what matters most: the food and growth. The privately held company, whose sales last year reached \$5.1 billion—up 9.3 percent, reports the research firm Technomic—may rank among the most intriguing growth stories in fast food.

Imagine this: a typical Chick-fil-A racked up annual sales of about \$3.3 million last year, while a typical McDonald’s posted sales of about \$2.5 million. Never mind that Chick-fil-A is closed Sundays.

“The next big thing is urbanization,” says Cathy, 61, who tools around on his Harley-Davidson in his spare time. “That’s where the future is heading.”



"The challenge in business is to stay ahead of the curve," Cathy says. For baby boomers, fast food was all about taste and price, he says. But for millennials, he notes, it's also about local sourcing, product quality, and worker rights. For them, he said, "it's not just a product story any more—but the whole story."

This is the same company whose chief spokesman is a cartoon cow whose singular message for almost two decades has never changed: "Eat Mor Chikin." And it's a company in which 93-year-old founder S. Truett Cathy, Dan's father, still keeps an expansive office, replete with

photos of himself with George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, Billy Graham, and Pat Boone.

But if Chick-fil-A could frame a new photo of who matters most to the company, it might be someone such as 23-year-old Kelli Means-Cheeley. The Atlanta resident and recent college graduate stopped by a bustling Chick-fil-A near Atlanta's airport and offered a thumbs-up after sampling the new grilled chicken. Healthy ingredients are critical to Means-Cheeley, but, she says, "what's also important to me is taste." —Bruce Horowitz, *USA Today*

Pope asks forgiveness for clergy sexual abuse scandal

IN HIS STRONGEST personal remarks yet on the clergy sexual abuse scandal, Pope Francis asked forgiveness "for the damage" that abusive priests have inflicted on children and pledged that the Catholic Church "will not take one step backward" in efforts to address the crisis.

The pope stated that he felt "compelled to personally take on all the evil . . . and to ask for forgiveness for the damage they have done by sexually abusing children."

"The church is aware of this damage," he said. "It is personal and moral damage, but carried out by men of the church. And we do not want to take one step backward in dealing with this problem and the sanctions that must be imposed. On the contrary, I believe that we have to be very firm. Because you cannot take chances with children!"

The pope's remarks on April 11 were in an unscripted addition to a speech he was giving to the International Catholic Child Bureau, a French Catholic network that works to promote the rights of children.

His comments were seen as a further effort to counter the criticism he has received for not addressing the clerical abuse crisis as quickly and aggressively as he has other issues.

Last December, the Vatican announced that Francis would name a commission to advise him on establishing rules and best practices for dioceses around the world to combat the abuse of children, and in March the pope appointed the first members.

Half of them are women, and one, Marie Collins of Ireland, was sexually abused by a priest as a child. The appointments raised hopes that the commission would, for the first time, try to tackle the crucial issue of disciplining bishops who do not act to curb suspected abusers.

Still, many advocates are dismayed that Francis has not met with victims, and they are upset with his recent comments to an Italian newspaper that the church has been unfairly singled out for criticism on this issue.

"This may be the first time a pope has talked of sanctions against complicit bishops. But that is all it is: talk," said Barbara Dorris of SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, a leading victims advocacy group.

"On church governance, church finances, and simple living, he acts," Dorris said. "On the rape of children, he talks." —RNS

Obama mourns Kansas gun violence, anti-Semitism: 'We're all children of God'

President Obama called for people of all faiths to deter gun violence and anti-Semitism one day after a gunman killed three people at Jewish centers in suburban Kansas City.

"That this occurred now—as Jews were preparing to celebrate Passover, as Christians were observing Palm Sunday—makes this tragedy all the more painful," the president said April 14 in Washington, D.C., at his annual Easter prayer breakfast.

The president noted that synagogues and Jewish community centers are now taking precautions by adding security measures.

"We're all children of God. We're all made in his image, all worthy of his love and dignity," he said. "We see what happens around the world when this kind of religious-based or -tinged violence can rear its ugly head. It's got no place in our society."

Obama noted that the two dead at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Kansas City, a grandfather and his teenaged grandson, attended the Church of the Resurrection, a United Methodist megachurch in nearby Leawood, Kansas. The church's pastor, Adam Hamilton, preached at Obama's inaugural prayer service in 2013.

The third person, a woman, was killed at a Jewish assisted-living facility in Overland Park. Frazier Glenn Cross, a white supremacist and former leader of the Ku Klux Klan, was formally charged with murder April 15.

At the Easter prayer breakfast, which has become an annual high-profile expression of his Christian faith, Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox leaders listened to Obama's remarks about sin and grace and Christians' belief in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

"We're also overwhelmed by the grace of an awesome God," Obama said. "In our Christian religious tradition we celebrate the glory of the resur-

rection—all so that we might be forgiven of our sins and granted everlasting life.”

Obama mentioned his recent visit with Pope Francis and how Christians “regardless of our denomination” have been moved by the pope’s message of justice and caring for the outcast.

“He reminds us that all of us, no matter what our station, have an obligation to live righteously and that we all have an obligation to live humbly because that’s, in fact, the example that we profess to follow,” Obama said, adding he hoped the pontiff will visit the United States.

The president noted that young men who are being mentored by faith leaders were attending the breakfast, and he encouraged others to join in his focus on aiding young African-American and Latino boys through his My Brother’s Keeper initiative.

Florida megachurch pastor Joel Hunter, who lost a son to suicide and a granddaughter to brain cancer, led a prayer and thanked the president for his friendship during those losses.

“Death, where is your sting?” he prayed, quoting from 1 Corinthians. “God, use this time to renew in us hope that outlasts disappointment and despair, and faith that cannot be crucified.” —Adelle M. Banks, RNS

Central African Republic clergy urge faster UN deployment of peace force

Religious leaders, playing an ever expanding role in the troubled Central African Republic, are urging reinforcements for an existing peace mission, even as the United Nations prepares to roll out a bigger one in September.

On April 10, the UN voted unanimously to deploy 12,000 peacekeepers to the country, where chaos linked to Christian and Islamist militias’ revenge attacks is continuing. Already, France has 2,000 soldiers in its former colony, joining 6,000 African Union forces.



APPEAL TO UN: Catholic Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga (left), Imam Oumar Kobine Layama, the senior Muslim leader in the Central African Republic (center), and Nicolas Guerekoyame, president of the Evangelical Alliance, clasp hands after signing a joint appeal to the United Nations for a speedier dispatch of additional peace forces to the quell the violence wracking the African nation. The interfaith Platform of Religious Leaders in the CAR have drawn international support from Muslim and Christian organizations.

In welcoming the UN announcement, African religious leaders urged immediate support for the existing mission to prevent the country from sliding further into chaos.

“As the force will only be deployed by September at the earliest, we urge that strong and immediate support be given in order to improve security at this crucial time,” said Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga of Bangui in a joint pre-Easter statement with Imam Oumar Kobine Layama, the CAR’s most senior Muslim leader, and Nicolas Guerekoyame Gbangou, president of the Evangelical Alliance.

That trio of religious leaders in the CAR were described as the driving force behind a historic agreement of principles on April 8. The Platform of Religious Leaders calls for intercommunal and interfaith dialogue between the key parties to the violent conflict.

Over 2,000 people have died in the violence since December, and 2 million others are in need of humanitarian aid.

A delegation of religious leaders from the United States was present to sign as witnesses to the agreements,

according to William F. Vendley, secretary general of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, whose office is at UN headquarters.

The American delegation included Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, archbishop emeritus of Washington, D.C.; Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals; and Imam Mohamed Magid, president of the Islamic Society of North America.

The church remains the only functioning body, Archbishop Samuel Kleda of Douala, Cameroon, told Fides news agency after visiting the CAR in April.

“The state no longer exists,” said Kleda. “The only institution that is functioning is the Catholic Church. Actually, the displaced are living in Catholic parishes.”

Bossangoa bishop Nestor-Désiré Nongo-Aziagbia said the lack of clear leadership and the behavior of some leaders in neighboring Chad were complicating matters. He claimed Chad is dividing the CAR by creating a protectorate in the north to resettle fleeing Muslims. —RNS/added sources

LIVING BY The Word

Sunday, May 18

1 Peter 2:2–10

A YOUNG GIRL stands before her classmates and teacher. Her teacher has chosen to be cruel. “Is it true,” asks the teacher with a sneer, “that your father is a drunkard?” The girl is well aware that her father comes home very late at night. She also knows the condition he is in when he does finally come home. Yet she responds flatly. “No,” she says. “My father is not a drunkard.”

In one of his essays, Dietrich Bonhoeffer uses this example to ask the question, “What does it mean to tell the truth?” What are we to make of this girl who brazenly refutes an indisputable fact? That’s a complicated question, but for Bonhoeffer the answer is clear. The girl did not lie. She spoke a truth that was deeper than what her teacher or classmates could grasp. (I found this in Eric Metaxas’s book *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*.)

Deeper truths are not warranted by the bare facts of surface realities or present circumstances. They draw instead upon the full depth of the encounter between two people—two people who have come to love each other. The girl speaks truly out of her encounter with her father, a person who is much more to her than someone with a drinking problem.

When the author of 1 Peter writes, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (2:9), he is speaking in a similar way. The recipients of his letter lived in the northwest corner of Asia Minor, far off the grid of Roman power. They were viewed as backward people, and they were subject to demeaning prejudice and occasional persecution. Mostly, they were simply forgotten. A people with no social standing, they were deemed unworthy of defending.

It is to these people that the letter proclaims such lofty praise, with words better suited to the Roman elite who ignored them.

What do we make of this? Is the writer telling a truth, a lie, or something in between? When a statement lacks both the intentional deception of a lie and the required accuracy of a truth, we often call this “stretching the truth.” Perhaps the author of 1 Peter is pulling and pressing words like the Silly Putty I played with as a child. *Chosen, royal, holy*—he hopes to superimpose these words over the hardscrabble circumstances of these new believers. He’s applying elevat-

ed language to a reality that they do not immediately fit. So we could conclude that 1 Peter is simply stretching the truth.

The philosopher Harry Gordon Frankfurt prefers a more colorful term for this. In his celebrated little book *On Bullshit*, Frankfurt argues that those who pursue this viable alternative to lying and truth telling are not merely compromising between the two. They are doing something that is different in kind.

According to Frankfurt, truth tellers and liars get their bearings from the same thing: from something they acknowledge to be true. One moves deliberately toward it. The other moves away from it—consciously and just as deliberately as the truth teller. But the one who practices this third, much baser art—the bullshitter—never even bothers to locate the truth in the first place. “He does not care,” says Frankfurt, “whether the things he says describe reality correctly. He just picks them out . . . to suit his purpose.”

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.” If this isn’t a straightforward truth or lie, does it rightly belong in this less-than-noble third category?

I don’t think so. The reason lies in the fourth declaration, in the verse that follows (2:10). You are “God’s own people,” says the author of 1 Peter. He is referring not just to the letter’s recipients themselves but to the encounter with Jesus Christ they now share. And he doesn’t ignore their lowly present circumstance. Like Bonhoeffer’s brazen young girl, he simply refuses to give this circumstance more than its due. He focuses instead on “the goodness of the Lord” that never changes and on the redemptive quality of a relationship in which mercies are bestowed as generously as mother’s milk. First Peter speaks deep truth.

In *The Doors of the Sea: Where Was God in the Tsunami?* David Bentley Hart counsels that Christians should learn “to see two realities at once.” We see “the world as we all know it, in all its beauty and terror, grandeur and dreariness, delight and anguish,” he says. Yet we also need to see the world “in its first and ultimate truth . . . an endless sea of glory, radiant with the beauty of God in every part.”

This is important and true. But the author of 1 Peter might add that it is not enough merely to see the world in this second way. We are also to give testimony about what we see. “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation . . . in order that you may proclaim” (emphasis added). As “God’s own people,” we dare to speak a deeper truth.

Reflections on the lectionary

Sunday, May 25

John 14:15–21

I LOVE YOU LITTLE. I love you big. I love you like a little pig.” During my visit to the nursing home that afternoon, I must have heard this sweet, odd rhyme more than a hundred times. I was sitting in the atrium, talking to a distinguished older man I had come to visit. He was a church member, and I enjoyed visiting him. But that particular day we were not sitting there alone. Near us sat a woman, another resident, wearing a nondescript pastel blouse and a broad, broad smile.

Though the woman sat close enough to touch, she expressed no interest in us or in our conversation. She just stared out the window and said those childlike words: “I love you little. I love you big.” She repeated them again and again and again. “I love you like a little pig.”

I tried my best to focus on the man I had come to see. But throughout my conversation with him, I caught myself wondering about our neighbor and her whimsical rhyme. Did she ever say anything else? Of all the words to remember, why these?

As I was leaving the nursing home, my curiosity got the better of me. I searched for a nurse and, feeling a little sheepish about interrupting her work, approached her. “Could I ask you an odd question?” I said. “The woman who sits in the atrium. She says this little rhyme over and over. Do you know why she does this?”

The nurse smiled and repeated the words with a dramatic flair: “I love you little. I love you big. I love you like a little pig!” She had obviously heard the rhyme thousands of times—and she wasn’t the least bit tired of it. “That’s Thelma,” she explained. “She taught first grade for more than 30 years. Her little rhyme was her own special way of greeting the children each morning. As she helped them remove their coats, she would whisper those words in every little ear. It was her way to let each child know she possessed a special place in her heart.”

Thelma’s mind was ravaged by dementia, but here was this single holdout from her memory. I marveled at this.

Perhaps Thelma and her rhyme suggest a way to understand one of the most cryptic things Jesus says in the Gospels. “I am in my Father,” he assures his disciples in this week’s reading from John, “and you in me, and I in you” (14:20). Maybe this

saying points to some esoteric, mystical indwelling. But I wonder if Jesus has something more familiar in mind, something more easily recognizable. I wonder if he is referring to a depth of loyalty and commitment—a love—that is typically reserved for the closest members of one’s own family. This particular kind of love is expressed during moments of great challenge, moments when we say something even stronger than the colloquial “I am behind you” or “I am standing with you.” We say, “You are in my heart and mind.” It is a kind of cherishing.

Compared to various other attributes we assign to God, cherishing has received relatively little theological attention. Maybe this is because it is so easily absorbed into the broader category of love. Yet cherishing represents a specific kind of love or, better, a specific way of loving—one that inspires deep commitment and stubborn loyalty. It is about a merging of heart, mind, and will. All this may be difficult to put into words, but it is immediately recognizable to those who have experienced it.

Thelma gave this kind of love to her students. That is, she gave them a sustained cherishing, not mere mindless repeti-

Cherishing is a way of loving marked by deep commitment and loyalty.

tion. This is why she greeted every student with a hug and a rhyme—and it’s why, even now, she can’t seem to stop greeting them. Her students reside in her. And for those who accept this rarest of gifts, she resides in them.

“I love you little. I love you big. I love you like a little pig.” “Does she always do that?” I asked the nurse.

“Oh, no!” she replied. “Only when she is very happy.” The nurse paused. “But then again, Thelma has had a good life, and she’s happy most of the time.”

Perhaps this is what our Creator God feels through the gift of Son and Spirit. God feels an eternal joy, a joy that arises out of cherishing. And, like God in heaven, Thelma expresses her love to individuals as they pass through her consciousness. She keeps them in mind; they live in her. And she lives on in them—at least in those who have ears to hear.

The author is Mark Ralls, senior minister of Centenary United Methodist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Faith of the senses

by S. Brent Plate

DEVOUT PEOPLE in many religious traditions often denigrate material goods, suggesting that the object of devotion is beyond what can be seen, felt, and heard. Yet a look at religious history, including Christian history, reveals a deep-seated, perennial love for things. Objects large and small, valuable and worthless, are part of the tradition from the beginning, creating memories and meanings for the Christians who pray and worship, love and share, make pilgrimage and make music. An account of Christian history is incomplete if it ignores material things.

My aim here is to tell a story of Christian life in five objects, with frequent reference to the human body that connects and corresponds with these objects. This history does not pretend to be comprehensive, nor is it a “greatest hits” of Christian

material history. It does aim to reorient our gaze and to help us understand faith as derived from rudimentary experiences and lived, embodied practices.

1. Stone of Anointing, Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

The pilgrims come, often on battered knees, to kiss, weep, and pray over the large stone slab at the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Stone of Anointing is known as the place where Joseph of Arimathea prepared Jesus’ body for burial. While the current stone dates only from 1810, when it was installed after a devastating fire, the power of place endows it with an eternal energy. For many pilgrims, this is the most holy place of Christianity, the site of Jesus’ death, entombment, and resurrection.



PHOTO BY MATTHEW ROTH

1

While the historical setting of the stone clearly lends it power, something inherent in the solid substance itself makes it a natural conduit for sacred energy. Perhaps it is the ubiquity of stones in human life, their pragmatic functions as tools, weapons, and markers as well as their durability and relative immutability, that has prompted us to bestow certain ones with spiritual power.

Japanese Buddhists put stones at the center of their temple gardens; the Black Stone stands at the southeast corner of the Kaaba in Mecca, the axis mundi of Islam; and a little more than a stone's throw from the Stone of Anointing is the Dome of the Rock, standing over the Foundation Stone, the setting for the ancient Holy of Holies of the Israelite temple. Stones link us to people and events across the years and draw us to them from thousands of miles away.

An Eritrean refugee named Teame Tesfamichae came to pray at the Stone of Anointing and touch his forehead against the hard surface. "I have no words to express what it means for me to pray here," he told Judith Sudilovsky, a reporter for Catholic News Service in 2012. "More than anything, I feel the one who died here for me." Here the touch of an object, a physical connection with a place, compresses time and evokes a feeling of connection beyond words.

The devout bring their personal crucifixes, icons, and Bibles to the stone. The sacred energy is distributed from object to

Stone is used globally as a medium for remembering what has come before.

object and carried home. The stone is slick, worn smooth from thousands upon thousands of fingers caressing its surface—touches that connect the faithful with the life and death of Jesus.

Stone is used globally as a medium for remembering what has come before. Many of us keep stones on our shelves that were taken from some meaningful place and serve as a souvenir. Humans feel connections with stones; they fondle them, touch them, kiss them, and tell stories by them.

2. Kebaro (drum), Aksum Museum in Aksum, Ethiopia

The first beating of the *Homo sapiens* heart occurred almost 200,000 years ago along the Omo River in the southwestern portion of what is now Ethiopia. That country is one of the world's oldest Christian nations. Before the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire, King Ezana was converted to Christianity, and he made it the religion of his kingdom, then known as Aksum and centered north of present-day Addis Ababa. Eighteen hundred years later, Christianity is still professed by close to two-thirds of the people.

The pulse of the liturgy in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is maintained by the kebaro, a large, double-sided kettle drum.

PHOTO BY CRISPIN PAINE



Typically stored in the treasure house of the church, the kebaro is used only on Sundays and feast days. It is played by debtaras, musicians who stand in long lines. Their drumming is accompanied by chants, the jangling of sistrums, and the unified pounding of prayer sticks on the ground.

Debtaras trace their roots back to St. Yared, a sixth-century musician credited with creating the sacred music tradition of Ethiopia. Debtara training is extensive, beginning around age five. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the kebaro is that it has been regarded as a symbol of Christ himself. The drum and its sounds signal the presence of the Word of God. The Word is heard, just as 1 John 1 testifies: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard . . . concerning the word of life."

Over the years some Christians have been opposed to drums. Fundamentalist preachers in the United States who condemn rock 'n' roll's raunchy lyrics often cite the sound of the drum as particularly egregious. Such preachers are extending a critique lodged by many missionaries, who sought to eliminate the use of "heathen" drums. One striking example comes from the Sami people of Lapland, who call their time before Christians arrived "drum time" and the time afterward "the time when one had to hide the drums."

3. Gold censer, adorned with 60 jewels—ca. third century, location unknown

The medieval *Liber Pontificalis* (*Book of the Popes*), which offers biographical details of church leaders in the early centuries of Christianity, includes extensive descriptions of gifts

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that Emperor Constantine donated to the church. Constantine built the original basilica of St. Peter in Rome and filled it with precious objects—silver pitchers and chalices, bronze candelabras, and an enormous gold cross, among other items. The *Liber Pontificalis* tells of a gold censer given for “ornament” which weighed 15 pounds and was “adorned on every side with jewels, 60 in number.” The object was most likely plundered during one of the Gothic sacks of Rome, and its location is unknown today.

That Constantine’s censer was listed as an ornament offers a clue to understanding its early use. As Christianity emerged from its pagan and Jewish roots, its leaders renounced the use of incense. Burning sacrifices offered a “pleasing odor to the Lord,” according to Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus, but St. John Chrysostom tried to counter such anthropomorphic tendencies, declaring, “God has no nostrils.” The influential theologian Origen, writing in the third century, suggested that one clear way to distinguish Christians from pagans was by the burning of incense. Jesus Christ, Origen claimed, will “defend us from the earth-spirits intent on lust, and blood, and sacrificial odors, and strange sounds, and other sensual things.” A censer might serve as an ornament, but in the early years of the church it was not given a place in Christian worship as it was among Jews or pagans.

As Christianity began to create its own unique identity, certain symbolic objects and actions were to be left behind. New religious movements and reformations often bring with them a purging of sensual-ritual activities, claiming to aspire to something higher, by which is meant something more invisible.

But however much leaders insist that God cares about the inner life and a contrite heart, people remain sensually motivated beings. The very fact that early church leaders had to continually speak out against the use of incense implies that the practice continued among Christians. And Christians continued to tell the story of the three precious gifts given to the Christ child—gold, frankincense, and myrrh—two of which were meant to be burned to provide a pleasing aroma.

4. Low-gluten altar bread, Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Clyde, Missouri

For Roman Catholics, wheat bread and alcoholic wine are the approved ingredients of the Eucharist, and there is to be no substitute—no gluten-free bread, no alcohol-free wine. In 1995, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, writing as prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, defended this stance and stated, “Given the centrality of the celebration of the Eucharist in the life of the priest, candidates for the priesthood who are affected by celiac disease or suffer from alcoholism or similar conditions may not be admitted to holy orders.”

Nonetheless, practice has proved more pliable. The Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration have become the global suppliers of bread for Catholics who suffer from gluten intolerance. The community began in 1874 when a small group of women left Switzerland and came to the United States, founding a monastery in Clyde, Missouri, that ministered to German immigrants. The sisters taught school, ran an orphan-



age, and started a farm. In 1910 they began to make altar breads and are now one of the world’s largest religious producers of such breads.

In 2003, the sisters began making low-gluten wafers, and they have since been overwhelmed by the demand. In conjunction with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops they came up with a recipe that uses a wheat starch with most of the gluten removed. It is still made with wheat only and thus fulfills the Roman Catholic requirement, but the gluten content is

Nontraditional communion elements have been needed in various places and times.

less than .01 percent, making it safe for most people who suffer from celiac disease.

In 2007 the worldwide Anglican Communion studied the need to use a substitute for wheat bread and alcoholic wine in parts of the world where Christians do not have access to these substances. The Anglican report reconfirmed that using wheat bread and alcoholic wine is best but said the final decision on practice should be made at the local level.

In Uganda, during the years of Idi Amin’s ruthless reign, when it was difficult to obtain wine and bread, Anglicans used banana juice or Coca-Cola in place of wine and biscuits for bread. During the height of the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba, churches on the island began to brew a kind of wine made of honey, fruit, and grain. In war-torn Sudan, bread has often been unavailable and so cassava is used. There are accounts of Polynesians using coconut and of Hawaiians using poi instead of bread. Ethnic East Asian Protestant churches in

Los Angeles have used rice for communion—not because they can't find bread but because that's what was used in their members' homeland, in places where bread does not have comparable symbolic powers.

5. Tattoo photo collage, Flatirons Community Church, Lafayette, Colorado

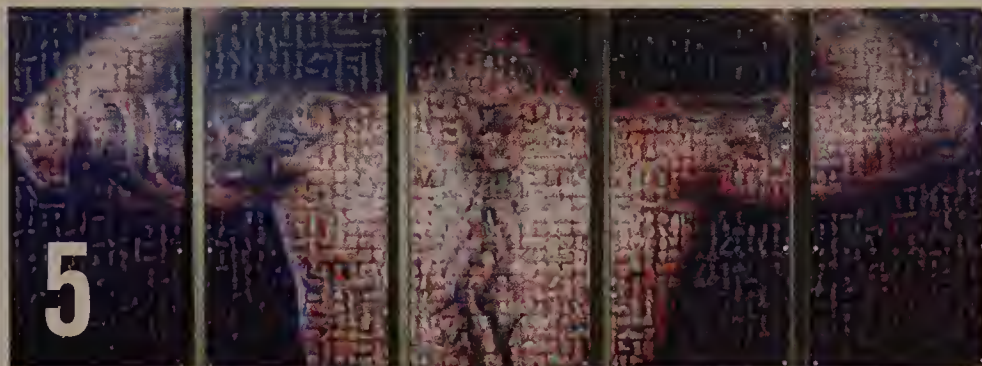
In a vast, repurposed Walmart located between Denver and Boulder, Flatirons Community Church throbs with a \$2 million audiovisual system that cranks out U2, Foo Fighters, and Led Zeppelin cover songs performed by a live band. Earplugs are available at the entrance. Since it began 20 years ago in a high school auditorium, Flatirons has become one of the largest congregations in Colorado, with over 15,000 people attending four services on any given weekend.

Part of the emerging church movement, Flatirons is a long way from the fundamentalism of the 20th century. This church does not proclaim a Christ against culture, to use H. Richard Niebuhr's terms, but a Christ of culture who seeks to transform it. Among other trends, the emerging church is marked by progressive social attitudes and a resurgence of the arts: visual representations of all kinds dominate meeting spaces and worship services.

The expansive open lobby at Flatirons displays a wall-sized photo collage made from hundreds of small images of individual tattoos. Closeups of Celtic crosses on biceps are portrayed next to death dates etched into skin; a Chi-Rho appears on a back near an alpha and omega tattooed on a leg. Collectively the images morph into a large, five-paneled image of a muscular man's shoulders, shirtless, heavily inked, and flexing.

The art project came about in 2007, when the church hosted a sermon series with the title "Flatirons Ink," taking off from reality television shows like *Miami Ink* and *LA Ink*. Believing that "everyone's got a story, everyone's been marked," the organizers encouraged those with tattoos to get their marks photographed and to record their stories.

Tattoos might be seen as a new fashion in the faith, but the history of Christianity shows otherwise. *Tattoo*, the term most commonly used for permanent body markings in the modern West, comes from a Polynesian word, and such markings have been found in cultures around the world for several millennia. In the ancient Mediterranean world they were known by the Greek term *stigma* (plural, *stigmata*), a word that in contemporary times carries the negative connotations of the original. A stigma was an indelible body mark, painfully applied with needles or brands, which showed the downgraded social status of the person—slaves and criminals were distinguished this way. Certain Christians adopted the stigma as a way to show their commitment to be a "slave to God." Later deemed heretical, the fourth-century Montanists used crosses as a stigma on their bodies, while



PHOTOS BY S. BRENT PLATE

persecuted Coptic Christians tattooed crosses on their inner arms as a sign of faithfulness. Ethiopian Christians even today sometimes have a cross tattooed on their forehead to display their faith. For almost two millennia, tattoos have visually and bodily marked faith. Flatirons Church is reviving an ancient tradition.

Though my choice of these five objects is somewhat arbitrary, each relates to the use of one of the five senses—touching, hearing, smelling, tasting, or seeing. Which is also to say that the history of Christianity is also a history of the senses. In book ten of the *Confessions*, St. Augustine refers to his "knowledge" of God and tells of "a certain kind of light and sound and fragrance and food and embrace in loving my God." Augustine's God is multisensual.

Most of us will probably not have such an intense, singular, all-encompassing experience of God. Yet each of us has chewed a delightful morsel of food, smelled an irresistible flower, touched a smoothed stone that tingled the fingers, heard music that sent shivers down the spine, or seen an image that made us stop and weep. When we recognize the depths of our own sensual body and our shimmering material world, we begin to realize the depths of the body of Christ, a body with sense organs.

CC

False witness

by Christopher M. Leighton

IN RESPONSE TO the injustices faced by Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, many Christians in the United States—including many within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—have become proponents of what is known as BDS: boycott/divest/sanctions. While the aim of the movement was initially to put economic and political pressure on Israel to end its occupation of the West Bank, the BDS movement is expanding its attack to challenge the foundational claims of a Jewish state.

Broad versions of BDS target all of Israel, while a narrower version targets only companies that conduct business in the West Bank. The latter movement has garnered support not only from Christians and Muslims but from segments of the Jewish community in North America and Israel. Organizations such as Shalom Achshav and Americans for Peace Now have endorsed the boycotting of goods manufactured in areas east of the 1967 Green Line which are claimed for the future Palestinian state. They have embraced this tactic not only as a means to end the occupation and advance a two-state solution but also to help Israelis realize the ideals in the 1948 Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel: "To foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex."

BDS activists insist that any collaboration with Israeli firms operating inside the West Bank gives legitimacy to the occupation. One target of the boycott has been SodaStream, which makes home carbonation products for the international market. One of its plants is located in the Ma'ale Adumim settlement and is the largest private employer of Palestinians in the West Bank.

Others argue that companies like SodaStream are helping to form the infrastructure of the future Palestinian state and that all states should be open to foreign investment. They point out that SodaStream offers its Palestinian workers the same salaries, benefits, and conditions as their Israeli counterparts. SodaStream's CEO, Daniel Birnbaum, claims that his enterprise creates something besides profits: "If [Palestinian and Israeli workers] learn to know each other, to respect each other, to live side by side, which is something that's going on here but not going on elsewhere, then you have a fundamental ingredient for peace." If a boycott were to succeed in shutting

down the SodaStream plant, roughly 500 Palestinian workers would lose their jobs.

The BDS initiatives focused on the West Bank are the subject of a legitimate debate. But recently the Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has developed a congregational study guide titled *Zionism Unsettled* which presses the PCUSA to embrace a strain of BDS that delegitimizes the existence of a Jewish state. The

To blame Israel alone for Palestinian suffering is historically shortsighted.

guide maligns the state of Israel and the Jewish yearning for a homeland, a yearning that characterizes every other nation. In doing so the guide abandons the mandate of the PCUSA's 218th General Assembly "to avoid taking broad stands that simplify a very complex situation into a caricature of reality where one side is clearly at fault and the other side is clearly a victim."

The claims of PCUSA representatives that the study guide speaks "to" the church rather than "for" it are belied by the facts that the guide was created by a group formed under the direction of the church and that it is advertised on the PCUSA website. The content of the guide does a disservice to the church and damages its ability to play a role in bringing about peace.

The IPMN is right to recognize the Palestinians' history of displacement and abuse. The Palestinian narrative is rooted in the 1947 United Nations resolution that established the state of Israel and in the ensuing 1948 war (which Palestinians call the Nakba, or the Catastrophe) which led to the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians. The Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank following the Six-Day War in 1967 and the subsequent Israeli military incursions into Lebanon and

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Gaza (following the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza) undermined conditions for political conciliation. The ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements, the brutality of Israeli military tactics, and the intransigence of governments—both Israeli and Palestinian—unwilling to make concessions necessary for establishing a Palestinian state have all deepened the desperation of the Palestinian populace and solidified their grievances.

Yet to blame Israel alone for Palestinian suffering, as the guide does—and to recommend a broad BDS initiative targeting all of Israel—is at best historically shortsighted. Those who listen to the Palestinian narrative must also consider the experience of the nearly 800,000 Jews who were expelled from or fled Arab countries after 1948; they have their stories of disaster and betrayal. Nor should we forget the Arab massacres of Jews in Damascus, Hebron, and elsewhere well before the establishment of Israel. Those who claim that the founding of Israel in 1948 or the extension of Israeli borders in 1967 created the problem ignore the long history of the Middle East’s own versions of Jew hatred.

Every suicide bomber celebrated by Palestinian schoolchildren, every copy of the Hamas Charter that calls for the end to the “Zionist entity,” and every missile launched by Islamic Jihad or Hamas or Hezbollah into Israel and targeting civilians makes peace even less of a possibility.

The refusal of Palestinians not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to recognize Israel as a Jewish homeland while at the same time insisting that the same area be recognized as the homeland of the Palestinian people exacerbates the problem. The Palestinians’ ongoing insistence on the “right of return” to homes and lands inhabited before 1948 is a dream—one that will not be accomplished and should not be. Only in the case of the Palestinians does the UN grant refugee status not only to the people who left or were forced from their land but to their children and their children’s children. By this definition of *refugee*, any group, generations later, would be able to claim land. (Transferred to the American context, this practice would mean that the Cherokee should be given Tennessee; the Seminole, Florida; and the Sioux, all of the Great Plains.) Such a move would not only be contrary to international practice, it would wipe out the Jewish identity of Israel.

Financially compensating Palestinians who lost homes and land in 1948 as an

alternative to return is a viable option. The Presbyterians might therefore consider investing in what will be the state of Palestine rather than supporting a lost and inappropriate cause.

The study guide couples its biased history with a biased theology that denies Jews their own self-definition even as it recapitulates old anti-Jewish tropes. Reaching a new low, *Zionism Unsettled* denies any legitimacy to the state of Israel whatsoever.

First the authors call into question the authority of the UN “to order or recommend the partition of Palestine” that led to establishment of the state of Israel. They do not, however,

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address the UN's competence to recognize a new state of Palestine or any other new state. Treating the globe's one Jewish state as exceptional is not a sign of fairness but of bigotry. The guide then reverses course and affirms the UN's juridical power to condemn Israel. Citing a long list of resolutions that Israel has violated, the authors build a case that undermines the right of a Jewish state to exist and renders it a "rogue."

Worse, the study guide not only impugns the UN partition resolution and delegitimizes the state of Israel, it goes to the obscene extreme of equating Zionism—the Jewish view of the land of Israel as the Jewish national homeland—with racism. The guide asserts: "Racism is the cornerstone of the Zionist project." The guide does not, however, see any racism in the insistence by the rulers of both Gaza and the West Bank that no Jew should live within the borders of the Palestinian state to be created in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The guide exacerbates its delegitimization of Israel by branding it "an apartheid state." Although the Presbyterian General Assembly rejected previous overtures that attempted to conflate Israel with the apartheid regime of South Africa, the guide uncritically endorses the

The farm wife eats out at Marner's Six Mile Café

Widowed farmers cram the table
near the peanut butter pies,

but I prefer the back booth
beneath a pike framed with flowers.

Under a coffee cup's "Start your day
with Jesus," I find Topeka Seed & Stove.

Once, when it was crowded,
we ate in the kitchen where an Amish

cook beats batter while flipping eggs
and watching toast. Annie doesn't bring

us menus. She knows the girls and I
will order pancakes with cinnamon butter

faces. When my sisters visit, they say,
"Let's go someplace with atmosphere."

They mean a chain near the interstate
where they decorate with movie stars

and license plates, where the booths
are so tall, you can't see your neighbors.

Shari Wagner

accusation by claiming that "the Israeli form of apartheid is becoming increasingly entrenched" and the situation has become "irreversible." The fact that Arabs, Muslims, and Christians are legally vested with full citizen rights in Israel is ignored. By their definition, the authors also need to brand various Muslim nations "apartheid" regimes.

Next, the guide insists that Zionism is a "false theology . . . a heretical doctrine that promotes death rather than life." It characterizes Zionism as a source of "evil" that leads inexorably to "ethnic cleansing" and "cultural genocide." It claims

By insisting that Zionism is racist, the guide bears false witness against Jews.

that "the major American Jewish organizations bear considerable responsibility" for a "pathology" of supporting Zionism that leads to "self-inflicted blindness."

Finally, the study guide moves into supersessionism, a view that the PCUSA has previously rejected. "With the coming of Christ and the founding of the Church," the guide says, "in some sense the old covenant has been replaced or superseded by the new covenant in Christ." In the sense that the old covenant entailed the promise of a specific land to a specific people, the guide makes it clear that the covenant has been superseded. It thus makes the promises to Israel null and void with Christ's arrival. In response to Jews who cite Bible tradition to show both a theological and a historical connection to the land, the guide evokes replacement theology and denies the historical connection. Then, in a remarkable example of hypocrisy, it cites Christian theology and Palestinian claims to justify its position.

Jews have regarded the land of Israel as their home since Old Testament times. Indeed, Jews have consistently lived in the land from then until now. To this day, practicing Jews pray facing Jerusalem; they declare at the conclusion of every Yom Kippur service and Passover celebration, "next year in Jerusalem"; and they pray daily for "the peace of Jerusalem."

This connection to Israel is not only a religious view supported by prophecies to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. For many Jews, the connection to Israel is a historical one. The term *Zionism* originated in the 19th century as an expression of Jewish nationalism: secular Jews promoted the Zionist ideal in their quest for a national homeland where they could find safety from a Europe in which they were facing increasing discrimination and persecution. The Zionist ideal of a homeland, determined not by theology but by history, has informed Jewish identity for more than a century.

By erroneously insisting that Zionism—the Jewish yearning for a national homeland, a yearning that all peoples have—is racist, the study guide bears false witness against Jews. By accusing Israel of being an apartheid state, the guide

ignores the facts on the ground, fails to acknowledge the rights possessed by non-Jews in Israel, and conceals Palestinians' goal of having a state where no Jew can live. By pathologizing the Jewish people and by failing to have any conversation with the representatives of the "major Jewish organizations," the guide's authors break with the church's commitment to peace, to justice, to fairness, and to a two-state solution.

For 26 years I have worked in an organization that brings Christians and Jews into difficult conversations about scriptural and theological issues. We have labored long and hard to confront misunderstandings that are embedded within our traditions. The clergy, educators, and scholars with whom we work wonder why the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is shifting from a limited critique of Israel to a campaign of delegitimization. They want to know why *Zionism Unsettled* omits divergent points of view, promotes historical caricatures, and disseminates heavy-handed indictments.

I am convinced that the change reveals a growing sense of desperation. There is an emerging conviction that a two-state solution is no longer possible. Despair is spurring people to conclude that the time has come to choose sides. Frustration is eclipsing hope. Yet a church that no longer believes in the possibility of reconciliation will betray its gospel proclamation.

Instead of pursuing divestment and boycotts, and certainly instead of denying legitimacy to Jewish self-definition and the state of Israel, the better option would be to focus on communication coupled with creative investment. Presbyterians will better express the gospel of love when they relinquish the vindictive impulse to punish Israel and find opportunities to direct their resources to helping Palestinian stakeholders.

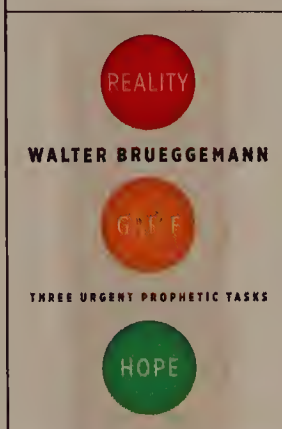
In fostering creative reinvestment, the church would also be standing in solidarity with many Muslims as well as fellow Christians in Palestine. The IPMN, in conjunction with its divestment partners, gives the impression that its support of broad-based BDS reflects the universal interests of Palestinians. Yet there are significant Palestinian voices who have spoken out against boycotting Israel. Mahmoud Abbas, head of the Palestinian Authority, has supported a boycott of products in the settlements but has also said: "We don't ask anyone to boycott Israel itself. We have relations with Israel, we have mutual recognition of Israel."

Christians need to resist the messianic zealotry that animates Israeli settlers and Christian Zionists, who dream of Israel

annexing the West Bank. At the same time, they need to fend off anti-Zionist ideologues who have jettisoned the role of peacemakers because they believe that Palestinians cannot win unless Israelis lose. If religious communities are to play a constructive role in the Middle East, they will need to enter into interfaith coalitions and risk unsettling conversations. They will need to invest their time, energy, and resources to create positive facts on the ground. In facing this challenge, Christians, Jews, and Muslims will either find ways to stand together in the midst of their differences or they will fall apart.

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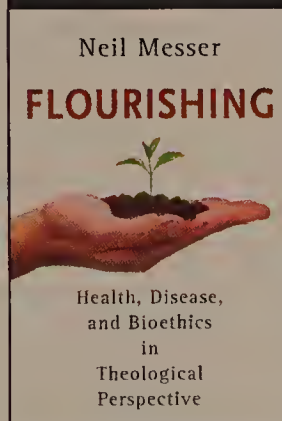
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Built on failure

by Kathleen L. Housley

RETRACTIONS OF scientific papers have soared in the past decade—up tenfold, according to a 2011 report in the journal *Nature*. At first glance, that fact might be taken as a sign of an increase in conscience among scientists who have discovered errors and omissions in previous work. Unfortunately, that is not the case. A study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in September 2012 concluded that misconduct, not error, was the reason for the majority of the retractions.

Furthermore, the uncovering of misconduct was due not to heightened editorial vigilance on the part of the scientific publications but to the prevalence of computer software that can detect data manipulation, plagiarism, and faked images. The study also showed that the problem is global.

Several factors are fueling malfeasance. The first is extreme competition for fewer jobs and diminishing grant money, leading to huge pressures on desperate scientists (especially young ones) to publish as fast and as often as possible. If they don't, they may end up being forced out of the profession. One prominent scientist has described it as a winner-take-all culture that encourages cheating.

A second factor is the commercialization of academic research, with its heavy emphasis on spin-off potential and profitability, which incentivizes the elimination of negative research data and the publication of positive results only. It is no surprise that clinical trials with positive results are twice as likely to be published as those with negative results.

In science, when negative data is not reported, the result is a silence that silences, leading to the potential that a life-saving drug is withheld, an ineffective treatment is used, or a valuable lead to a new discovery is missed or dangerously misinterpreted. There is no way for true scientific understanding to be built on what is not there.

An example is a case reported in the *New York Times* ("A Clash over a Spine Treatment," September 6, 2012) about a neurosurgeon who had an agreement with a device manufacturer to report on the progress of patients six months after undergoing a new spinal treatment. At six months, the results were encouraging, but beyond that point, several patients began experiencing significant problems. The neurosurgeon felt he had an ethical duty to his patients to report both positive and negative findings, regardless of time frame. When he did so, the device manufacturer filed a complaint with his university accusing him of scientific misconduct for following his

patients beyond the agreed six months. According to Dr. Eugene J. Carragee, a spine expert at Stanford University and editor of *The Spine Journal*, this case is an egregious example of the pressure to push positive findings beyond their scientific merit while ignoring negative findings.

The publishing of scientific articles based on fake data is relatively rare. More common are papers in which positive data is valorized over negative. In these, the data is accurate as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. Some of the reasons are rooted in human nature: there is a preference for positive results and novel findings, which in turn leads to a subtle bias in the design and analysis of experiments. Even with the best of ethical intentions, it is easy for a scientist to choose too narrowly from the mass of data at hand. The reason is simple but rarely recognized outside the laboratory—research is inherently messy and unpredictable; equipment fails; reagents vary in formulation or quality; technicians come and go; and anomalies appear at the most inconvenient times in the most inconvenient spots. Plus, there is much in nature that is beyond comprehension until new technology comes along.

For example, advances in gene sequencing have revealed that the vast majority of the genome, ignominiously and erroneously dubbed junk DNA back in the 1970s, is anything but. It plays an extensive role in regulating gene expression. The ENCODE project (Encyclopedia of DNA Elements) has found in the great complexity of genetics vast new avenues for research, thereby showing the fallacy of judging things as limited in value—junk—when what is limited is our ability to comprehend.

In an interview in *Scientific American* (September 18, 2012), Ewan Birney of the European Bioinformatics Institute, who led the ENCODE team of 400 scientists, said, "I get this strong feeling that previously I was ignorant of my own ignorance, and now I understand my ignorance." He sees the work of ENCODE as foundational—not an ending but a starting point for years and years of research. "We are complex creatures. We should expect that it's complex out there. But I think we should be happy about that and maybe even proud of it."

It would be unrealistic to demand that scientists must have more integrity. There is plenty of integrity, the neurosurgeon's

Kathleen L. Housley is the author of eight books, including works of poetry and essays on the intersection of religion and science.

actions and Birney's comments being indicative. It would also be unrealistic to demand that the winner-take-all culture of science be changed, although it needs to be. So how do we seek answers to the problem of deletion of negative data? One way to begin is to take a look at deletion from outside of science—specifically, how scholars handled problematic passages of scripture.

Consider the figure of Elihu in the book of Job. Scholars have long wondered whether Elihu is an editorial insertion who doesn't belong in the text. He suddenly appears in chapter 32 and disappears after chapter 37. Job doesn't respond to Elihu's arguments, and he is not listed among the friends who are ultimately forgiven. Whereas Maimonides in the 12th century stated in *Guide for the Perplexed* that, of Job's friends, Elihu presented the strongest arguments, Robert Alter in the 21st century considers him an interpolation by a misguided editor. Despite differing viewpoints among scholars separated by vast stretches of time, Judaism retains the idea that the inability of scholars to understand any text indicates their

What is lost by deletion cannot be corrected.

intellectual limitations, not a problem in the text. Nor are intellectual limitations cause for discouragement: if scholars were able to understand *all things*, then *all things* must be very small and probably not worth the effort.

Unfortunately, some recent translators have felt no such compunction and have deleted Elihu. One of those is the translator and poet Stephen Mitchell. On reading his version of the book of Job several years ago, I had a vague sense that something was missing, but there were no chapter and verse numbers to reveal what it was. Then, with a jolt, I realized there were only three friends debating with Job, not four. Elihu was gone!

And he hadn't gone empty-handed: besides the six chapters in which he appears, he had absconded with chapter 28—the magnificent poem on searching for wisdom, described metaphorically as a miner dangling in the pitch black of a shaft he has cut deep into the earth, laying bare the roots of mountains. Mitchell had arrogated to himself the right to decide what was essential for readers.

I would have been less concerned about his choice had he been open about it, stating on the cover that the text was abridged instead of mentioning it only in an endnote. Had he done so, he would have alerted people to the necessity of reading the uncut version to make their own fair assessment.

Few Torah scholars, no matter how brilliant, would have dared to think that their knowledge was so encyclopedic as to endow them with the right to delete a portion of the text. Besides respecting the inviolability of scripture, they would reason that while a passage might be

beyond their understanding, in the future someone might come along who has the ability to understand it, and for that person it must be preserved. Limited understanding, contradiction, and sharp disagreements, seen as positive attributes, point to a profound idea: there is not one meaning but an expanding infinity of meaning, and in that vastness is glimpsed the vastness of God.

To return to Elihu: he can be seen as a proto-scientist observing the darkening sky and the distant flashes of lightning. Prior to warning Job of the oncoming storm, he attempts to rebut what has been said by Job and his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. He is young and prideful, declaring insufferably that “one perfect in knowledge is with you.” Yet before we decide not to listen to him, we must remember that Job's entire argument about his innocence is predicated on his assertion that he is perfect in righteousness. Elihu asks Job if he can do the things that God can do, such as spread out the firmament like a molten mirror when the scorching south winds blow. Undercutting his own claim to perfect knowledge, Elihu states that God has no regard for those who consider themselves wise. To Job's demand that God answer him, Elihu points out that Job is not at the center of the universe and that God is beyond understanding and beyond reach but not beyond reverence (37: 23–24).

As important as what Elihu says is what he does. Like a perceptive naturalist, he notices what is going on in the world around him and is so frightened by what he sees that his heart “is leaping out of its place.” It is his observations that prepare the way for God's entry. As Elihu tries to gather his thoughts in the thickening darkness, his bellicosity decreases. He had begun his speech in arrogance; he ends it in silent awe as the whirlwind touches down. Although Elihu is never heard from again, his silence is far different than the utter silence that is imposed by deleting him from the text.

What is lost by means of deletion cannot be corrected, because it cannot be found. In science, access to negative data and failed experiments must be maintained. A dramatic example: in 1964, a cancer researcher at Wayne State University in Detroit had a colossal experimental failure. Jerome P. Horwitz had sought to develop a unique strat-

The truth that the author of this pamphlet presents is of the greatest interest to the life of the church and the child of God in the world. It is the precious truth of the assurance of one's salvation that is, the absolute assurance and confidence that one is an elect child of God, and the heir of all the blessings of salvation that are ours in the cross of Jesus Christ and by the application of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is in the confidence of this truth that the Apostle trumpets in Romans 8 that the believer, in the face of a host of differing trials and tribulations, is more than a conqueror.

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egy to stop the runaway growth of cancer cells by tricking them into incorporating a synthesized nucleoside into their DNA, causing them to be unable to replicate. One of his new compounds was azidothymidine (AZT). When he tried it in leukemic mice, however, the compound did not work. Horwitz was so disappointed he didn't even bother to patent his method.

Because Horwitz was working in academia, his data on AZT was maintained in the Wayne State archives, where it was available to other pharmaceutical researchers to explore. Occasionally AZT was tried with other diseases, but with no more success than against cancer.

Twenty years went by, during which time Horwitz never lost faith in AZT. He believed that the underlying theory was correct. "We had this very interesting set of compounds waiting for a disease to cure," he stated.

That disease turned out to be HIV/AIDS. AZT was one of the thousands of compounds that Burroughs Wellcome (now GlaxoSmithKline) screened, in conjunction with the National Cancer Institute. AZT was the first drug to treat HIV/AIDS successfully, though it did not cure it. Because he had never patented it, Horwitz didn't even learn that Burroughs Wellcome had been testing AZT against a form of AIDS-related pneumonia until 1985.

AZT's toxicity problems and its potential were both huge; so also was the subsequent acrimony over its exorbitant price and the enormous profits for Burroughs Wellcome. But at the time of his death in September 2012, Horowitz was not bitter. During all those years, he kept working on many projects, including reverse transcriptase inhibitors and drugs to treat solid tumors. He had wanted a career in which, as he said, he could "make a difference." His greatest failure turned out to be in his greatest success—it was a failure that eventually saved countless lives and laid the foundation for antiviral therapy.

The word for truth in Hebrew is *emet*, made up of the first, middle, and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The word for falsehood is *sheker*, made up of letters huddled together near the end of the alphabet. Jewish sages interpreted this to mean that truth is broad and balanced because of the shape of the individual letters, whereas falsehood is narrow and unbalanced. Furthermore, *emet* has its root in the word for foundation or support, meaning that it can be built upon. A deletion in science cannot be built upon because it is not there. Neither can a deletion in scripture. Without Elihu, the book of Job becomes unstable.

When God finally speaks to Job in chapter 38, he asks who laid the foundations of the earth, who used the ruler and the plumb line, who anchored the support pillars, who set the cornerstone in place. To build wisdom and knowledge, a firm foundation is the one essential thing. That foundation is composed of the multitude of things understood and things yet to be understood.

CC

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by Stephanie Paulsell

Praying *Jane Eyre*

A STUDENT approached me with an irresistible request. “I’m looking for someone to supervise an independent study for me,” she said. “I want to read Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre* as a sacred text. Would you be interested?”

Vanessa’s ministry is to seek ways of creating sacred community among diverse groups of people. From Judaism she inherits a conviction that reading together is one of those ways. Each week we read a portion of *Jane Eyre* together, trying to understand Jane’s theology, studying how Jane is transformed through her interactions with others, listening for the ways in which she and other characters are made vulnerable by love.

What does it mean to read Brontë’s novel as sacred? For Vanessa, it means having faith in Brontë’s words. The third-century Christian exegete Origen of Alexandria taught that when we come across stumbling blocks in scripture—things that we don’t understand or even things that can’t possibly be true—we need to read more deeply to discover meanings that lie below the surface.

Vanessa wanted to see what would happen if she put her faith in the words of *Jane Eyre*. She decided to read, as she put it, “as if each word was chosen with rigor and precision, a form of hard-won divine inspiration.” If she didn’t understand something in the text, or if she felt distrustful of its wisdom, she decided to keep reading and rereading. Vanessa has not tried to allegorize *Jane Eyre* as Origen did the Bible. But she patiently wrestles with certain passages until the text gives her a blessing.

As any reader of sacred texts knows, this kind of reading requires faith: faith that the work of close reading is worth the trouble, faith that there is a blessing to be had, faith in oneself as a reader. Over the years I’ve seen students worry about the formative power of close reading. If I get caught up in the language of Augustine’s *Confessions*, one student asked, will I absorb things I would rather resist? If I read closely, believing there is something worthwhile, will I lose the ability to critique what needs to be critiqued?

In reading *Jane Eyre* as a sacred text, Vanessa has not foreclosed on critique. It’s impossible to do word-by-word exegesis of a text and avoid critical questions. Vanessa is a terrific reader and skilled in identifying ways that texts undermine themselves, how they can try to lead us places we would rather not go. She knows how to practice the hermeneutics of suspicion. With *Jane Eyre* she wanted to practice something else: having faith that Charlotte Brontë had created something worth our reverent attention.

In the 12th century a Carthusian monk named Guigo II identified the practice of reading as the first step on a ladder to God. Reading a sacred text closely, he said, is like putting a delicious

grape into one’s mouth. The chewing of the grape extracts its sweetness, and that sweetness leads us to prayer and opens the possibility of a contemplative experience of the presence of God.

Vanessa has found that, as Guigo promised, this kind of reading leads toward the practice of prayer. One of Vanessa’s convictions about *Jane Eyre* as a sacred text is that it stands alone as a unity but can also be read in fragments. She has discovered prayers within the text of *Jane Eyre* and begun praying them.

Late one night, awake and fretful because of a conflict with someone, Vanessa prayed a prayer found in the advice of Jane’s friend Helen Burns: “The sovereign hand that created your frame, and put life into it, has provided you with other resources than your feeble self, or than creatures feeble as you.” After Vanessa prayed, sleep came easily.

Later, thinking back over the conversation that had kept her awake, she came to see that she had heard the mistakes the other person had made in the conversation, but she had not

Books read reverently may have prayers hiding in plain sight.

heard the ways in which she too was implicated in a breakdown of understanding. Praying her way through her distress helped her hear the other’s distress, and that opened the way to conversations between them that were truer and more healing.

Vanessa believes that a project like hers has the potential to change us. When we treat our engagements with books and with others as sacred we handle them more carefully, listen more closely, and are more patient when something meaningful doesn’t immediately emerge. We loosen our grip on protective strategies that allow us to hold things we don’t understand at arm’s length. We let ourselves be read and interpreted.

Vanessa and Jane have begun to change the way I read, too. I find that I want to slow down and listen for prayers that might be hiding in plain sight in any book. I find myself holding my books the way Vanessa holds her copy of *Jane Eyre*, in both hands. I hope to continue to learn how to hold more of what I encounter on any given day with such care.

Stephanie Paulsell teaches the practice of ministry studies at Harvard Divinity School.

IN Review

Disoriented by God

by Sarah Morice Brubaker

This book is very, very good. That is one of the easiest things to say about it, and one of the least surprising. Those already familiar with the work of Sarah Coakley, professor of religion at the University of Cambridge, have come to expect that her writing will contain fruitful theological questions, tantalizing claims that complicate facile assumptions, conceptual precision that would put a diamond cutter to shame, and references to a dizzying breadth of source material. All of those elements are present here. Neither old fans nor new readers need fear any disappointment.

Describing the book's scope, though, proves much more difficult than appraising its quality. This is no fault of the book or the author. Rather, it arises from the mismatch between the sort of thing a book review is and the sort of thing this book is. By way of analogy: suppose that theology books were weekend leisure opportunities. (I realize that for the peculiar among us, this describes the actual state of affairs.) Most theology books could be characterized as either day trips, performances, or guided visits to a museum. The reader gets a general sense of a terrain just outside the realm familiar to her, or she watches as an artist creates something new before her eyes, or she listens to a docent explaining what a number of artifacts mean and how they relate to each other in their historical contexts.

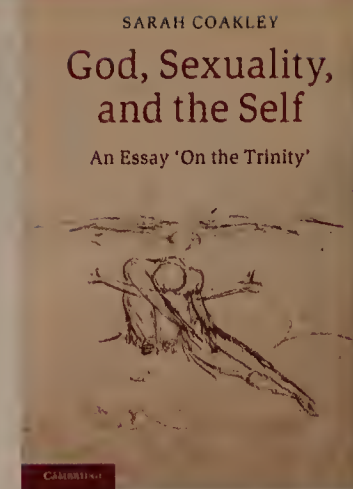
A travel writer would have no trouble reviewing any of those books. But reading *God, Sexuality, and the Self* is like watching the world premiere of a brilliant new opera—one whose story

draws on fascinating bits of regional history so viewers come away understanding their own home better, even though the art itself is new. Meanwhile, between every scene, an archivist gives a brief and erudite commentary on historical details that did not quite fit into the dramatic action but are important nonetheless. The experience is exhilarating, to be sure; but for the purposes of a review, what sort of thing is it? Is it primarily an artistic work that benefits from significant historical annotation? Is it a history lecture made more compelling by the inclusion of art? Or is it, above all, a gift to the particular community it depicts?

God, Sexuality, and the Self sounds in each of these registers simultaneously. Coakley tells readers at the outset that her aim is a *théologie totale*—an approach to Christian theology that seeks to make the Christian life compelling and comprehensible, but without relying wholly on rational mastery in order to do so. To the contrary, *théologie totale* proceeds not simply through argument, but through contemplative and ascetic embodied practice, “spiritual practices of attention that mysteriously challenge and *expand* the range of rationality, and simultaneously darken and break one’s hold on previous certainties.”

Théologie totale, then, will involve the careful deployment of reason and argument but will also rely on “practices of unmastery” because ultimately the intellect is one of the things that is transformed when it encounters God. One should expect such an encounter to be disorienting.

And that, Coakley suggests, is the



God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay “On the Trinity”

By Sarah Coakley
Cambridge University Press,
384 pp., \$29.99 paperback

problem with most reckonings of God’s triunity and human sexuality: many are insufficiently disorienting. This is a different criticism from saying that trinitarian models enshrine various social, political, and sexual agendas—although they all do, according to Coakley. Indeed, she says, no trinitarian model can ever be completely innocent of such associations. But Coakley’s critique concerns how these models have come to be sustained. They have been treated, she suggests, as though their persuasiveness derives mainly from practices of mastery, such as theological debate and ecclesial discipline, rather than from practices of ceding control to God in order to be transformed.

Coakley sees a deep correlation between sexual desire and the longing for God. Both promise—or threaten—to invite disorder, lability, disorientation, a blurring of lines between one and another. Yet if one resolves to crack down on the disorder through force and get everything sorted once and for all, one winds up with something that cannot satisfy the longings with which one began. One winds up—not to put too fine a point on it—with an ossified church, an unjust gender hierarchy, and an idol at the center of it all. One also—and this is the same thing, really—closes

Sarah Morice Brubaker teaches theology at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

oneself off to the transformative power of the Spirit, whose reinvigorating work happens, Coakley says, precisely in the subversive elements on the edge of church life.

God, Sexuality, and the Self is the first installment in Coakley's planned multi-volume systematic theology, and while it does attend deeply to theological method, it is not a book of prolegomenon or throat clearing. Nor is its several hundred pages of turgid prose accessible only to a few in the guild. To the contrary, Coakley has tried to make this book accessible to thoughtful nonspecialists by, for example, providing a glossary, supplying thorough annotated bibliographies at the end of each chapter, and including congregational interviews and artwork in her source material.

The conventions of academic writing that remain might prove too difficult for some nonspecialists. In particular, Coakley often introduces an argument by anticipating objections and noting potential misreadings and by showing how the argument she advances will need to avoid certain mistakes. While I expect that many nonspecialist readers would find this approach challenging, it also represents Coakley at her best. For example, she delivers a particularly devastating criticism of those who see Augustine as some kind of Cartesian *avant la lettre* whose nascent solipsism and individualism seep into the basement of Western theology like radon gas, eventually reaching toxic levels in the Enlightenment and requiring all inhabitants to lodge temporarily with their neighbors to the East.

Each of the chapters stands on its own as a comprehensible essay, so this book could yield readings suitable for a range of students. Graduate students would do well to read *God, Sexuality, and the Self* alongside standard works on the doctrine of God, like Catherine Mowry LaCugna's *God for Us* and John Zizioulas's *Being as Communion*. Of course, we peculiar ones who read theology as a weekend leisure activity need no further incentive to read *God, Sexuality, and the Self* because we know we will be rewarded with fresh insight and provocative critique. We may even find ourselves moved to pray more.

Paging God: Religion in the Halls of Medicine

By Wendy Cadge

University of Chicago Press, 328 pp., \$25.00
paperback

In today's politicized climate, the mention of religion and medicine in the same title might suggest a focus on insurance requirements under Obamacare. But the topic of Wendy Cadge's important book is both broader and deeper, longer term and more complicated: What happens to religion when hospitals, many of them founded by religious orders and denominations, are formally secularized or otherwise constrained to cater to patients beyond their founding communities?

Cadge's findings are based on surveys of 17 nationally ranked teaching hospitals and on intensive interviews and observations at two such hospitals located in an unnamed northeastern city. Cadge and her associates visited all of the hospitals' chapels. In one of the primary hospitals, which she calls Overbrook, she interviewed chaplains and shadowed them on their rounds. In the other ("City Hospital"), she interviewed and shadowed nurses and physicians in intensive care units.

One of the research team's first discoveries was a book of prayers of petition and thanksgiving in the lobby of one hospital. For a decade, prayer books had been placed at the base of a turn-of-the-century statue of Christ that in previous years had been informally adorned with messages written on scraps of paper. The researchers read hundreds of these prayers and saw that those who wrote them thought of God as accessible, listening, and sometimes answering prayer. But the very profusion of prayers gave a first unprompted glimpse of the importance of what we might think of as conventional religious expression on the part of those who frequent hospitals.

Reviewed by R. Stephen Warner, professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is coeditor of Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration.



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Such a background makes all the more dramatic the conclusion that Cadge draws from the "messy story" of these institutions. "Paradoxically, religion and spirituality seem to be most present in these hospitals when they are visibly absent and most absent when they are visibly present." The visible presence that stood in front of substantive absence was primarily that of chaplains and the chapels they oversee, while religion and spirituality seemed most present among nurses in the ICUs, where religiosity was visibly absent.

Cadge begins the narrative of her research with a look at chapels. Each of the 17 institutions surveyed had at least one chapel or meditation room; more than half had two or more. The chapels varied along a continuum from those that reflected the religious tradition out of which the particular hospital emerged, through those that had been refashioned as multifaith spaces, to those that aspired to be religiously neutral. The trend seems to be in the direction of religious neutrality, symbolized by images of nature, such as the play of water and light, and an absence of overt religious references. Unmoved by such efforts at inclusion by subtraction, Cadge suggests that the purported neutrality is only skin-deep. It is most suited to those—often liberal Protestants—for whom religion is itself abstract and private.

The chaplains interviewed by the research team were of mixed mind about religious neutrality. One chaplain-in-training complained that their theological language has to be "so watered down . . . you could find it in the telephone book." Cadge presents the chaplaincy as at the forefront of the substitution of spirituality for religion, and spiritual care for pastoral care. The leaders of chaplaincy departments understood spirituality to be more inclusive than religion, but they had difficulty defining or communicating what they meant by *spiritual*, while their certification as chaplains depended on credentials conferred by a conventional religious body. The concept of spirituality is at best a work in progress. Indeed, Cadge interprets the very vagueness of the rubric as an aspect of a "jurisdic-

tional expansion strategy" for chaplaincy as a profession.

At least one of the chaplains Cadge followed was sufficiently skilled to offer prayers that satisfied both her own understanding of spirituality and the religious needs of patients. But few in the hospitals understood what the chaplains' spiritual language meant—least of all the physicians, who increasingly come from Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and nonreligious backgrounds.

It was in the intensive care units at City Hospital, especially the neonatal Intensive Care Unit, that Cadge perceived the presence of religion. Although the conditions attached to her research precluded her from interviewing patients or their families, she, along with nurses, sensed their need for religious care. That may be because nurses have the most sustained contact with patients and because the majority of both nurses and patients at City Hospital were Catholic and attuned to the Catholic language of prayer and ritual.

But nurses who were not Catholic also attended to religious needs. A Jewish nurse told Cadge that early in her time in the NICU she had learned the rule, "If a baby is dying, . . . you have to baptize the baby." A respiratory therapist explained further that this is a default rule that applies when the staff doesn't know the family's intentions. "We do it by sprinkling water on the child's head and saying a short prayer. If [it turns out that the family] didn't want it, we don't have to mention it."

In the penultimate chapter, "Managing Death," Cadge explains that chaplains are put to work when the physicians have done their best, only to see their patients die. An Overbrook chaplain was called whenever a patient passed away—three times a day on average. Chaplains help families deal with death: naming it, conducting last rites, seeing to the preparation of the body, and working with the morgue. The chaplains saw sacredness in the limits of life and willingly took on responsibility for what the hospitals defined as failure and indisputably a matter for religious workers. Nevertheless Cadge found the understanding that chaplains are uniquely qualified to deal with death served to undercut a

broader understanding of spiritual care—the promotion of wholeness and healing—that their professional interest calls for.

Cadge is not recommending a return to an old-fashioned sectarian religious presence in hospitals, let alone a specifically Christian presence. A prolific and influential scholar in the sociology of religion and a professor at Brandeis University, she has made significant contributions to the understanding of LGBTQ-friendly churches and Buddhist temples. Indeed, this book begins with a vignette that signals her ease with Theravada Buddhist ritual. She is a sought-after speaker at chaplains' professional meetings and does not reject their attempt to define their purview as broader than conventional religion. But she challenges chaplains to be more systematic in defining and communicating what they mean by spirituality and not to take for granted the meaning that spirituality may have for the populations they serve or the other professionals with whom they work.

Salinger

By David Shields and Shane Salerno
Simon & Schuster, 720 pp.,
\$19.99 paperback

There is no denying the staying power of J. D. Salinger. All you have to do is teach *Catcher in the Rye* to a group of high schoolers—or better yet, assign *Franny and Zooey* to a bunch of unsuspecting college students—shake and stir, and voila! Immediate knee-jerk admiration and wonder is almost guaranteed. For a large percentage of students, Salinger can still pack a tremendous punch, and he still connects with the spiritual seeker inclinations that are common among university students.

It's tough to put a finger on the precise nature of Salinger's cultlike following. While teaching *Franny and Zooey* last semester just after the release of the new book *Salinger* and

the companion documentary film, I was deeply struck—again—by the infatuations that Salinger's often elegant and funny prose and his spiritual musings are able to inspire in readers at a certain stage in life. Near the end of *Franny and Zooey* is a moment when the young TV talent Zooey inspects the haunted room of his much older, dead-by-suicide brother, Seymour. The inside face of the door is covered with hand-scribbled quotes from muses, philosophers, and mystics from throughout the world's literary and religions traditions: Pascal, Baudelaire, Kobayashi Issa, Marcus Aurelius, Sri Ramakrishna, Kafka, Tolstoy, Emily Dickinson, and others.

The door represents the scores of spiritual options available to young seekers of truth; it also represents a doorway into the future—and into the past, being

Reviewed by Harold K. Bush, author of *Lincoln in His Own Time* and professor of English at Saint Louis University.



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The Rev. **Lillian Daniel** is the author of the 2013 book *When Spiritual But Not Religious Is Not Enough: Seeing God in Surprising Places, Even the Church*. She has served as the senior minister of the First Congregational Church, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, since 2004.



The Rev. **Martin B. Copenhaver** is author of the 2013 book *Living Faith while Holding Doubts*. He has been senior pastor of Wellesley Congregational Church in Massachusetts since 1994 and has been named president-elect of Andover Newton Theological School.

Daniel and Copenhaver coauthored *This Odd and Wondrous Calling: The Public and Private Lives of Two Ministers*.

the entrance to the untouched room of the brilliant but suicidal Seymour. It was Seymour who expressed to his younger siblings the true power of the “Jesus prayer”: not an unending mumbling of a prayer under our breath, but a way of life, a spiritual practice in which we all see ourselves somehow achieving the glory of work by investing ourselves in whatever it is we can do best. Without actually naming this activity a *vocation* or *calling*, that’s what Salinger seems to be getting at in *Franny and Zooey*, and it remains a powerful point for young people. But *Franny and Zooey* is also a story with a certain mazelike quality that resists any certainty or easy answers.

Salinger is likewise difficult to characterize. Already numerous reviewers and readers have taken the authors to task for its structure and form. At one point David Shields and Shane Salerno describe it as an oral biography. But it’s more like a scrapbook. The authors seem intent on simply presenting a plethora of nearly unorganized quotes, anecdotes, jokes, excerpts from letters and journals, and occasional celebrity razzle-dazzle about one of Salinger’s books or stories. There is no index, so for scholars who might like to use the book, it’s very difficult to track down various topics or personalities. In short, this book is a mish-mash, often brilliant, but sometimes odd and confusing. It’s unwieldy and under-

edited: it has the decided feel of being rushed into print.

The cover of the book is very cool: it resembles a worn-out and dog-eared copy of the original paperback *Catcher in the Rye*, one of the most famous book covers of the 20th century. The biographical scope of *Salinger* is extensive; the authors logged over 200 interviews with friends, family, and acquaintances of Salinger to add to what they’d already learned in their decades-long obsession with the mysterious author. The book also gathers excerpts from a large number of published interviews and other documents, so it is a handy edition of previously uncollected sources of information.

Much of the book is concerned with Salinger’s sexual fixations on various young women, and it displays great curiosity about the psychological meaning of Salinger’s testicular abnormalities. The authors and the publisher must both assume that these genital secrets have crucial explanatory powers. Another observer might argue that such information is mostly needed for the selling of books.

Far more interesting, and perhaps the greatest contribution to the book’s value, is the material presented about Salinger’s service during World War II. He landed on Utah Beach on D-Day and, along with a couple of other officers, worked the towns and villages for

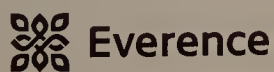
intelligence as the Allied armies marched toward Paris and later into Germany. (The book contains excellent photos of Salinger in uniform, alone and with his buddies.) Among other nuggets are vivid memories of the liberation of Dachau.

It is fascinating that while Salinger was doing his duty for army intelligence, he was simultaneously lugging around and scribbling sections of a novel he wanted to finish about a high schooler named Holden Caulfield. That novel, the first part of which Salinger carried onto the beaches on D-Day, has by now sold over 65 million copies. *Salinger* contains impressive, fresh insights about the traumatic experience of an army veteran whose later depictions of traumatized characters would rock the world of the baby boomers who reached their teens during the 1950s and ’60s. Even though Salinger rarely mentioned the war in his fiction, Shields and Salerno recognize the influence of the traumas of World War II on Salinger’s writings.

Another excellent addition is the very long section at depicting Salinger as a retired citizen of small-town America, a regular Joe who routinely came into town for lunch, strolled the sidewalks, and attended basketball games and civic meetings. He became a regular attendee of \$12 dinners at First Congregational

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Church in Hartford, Vermont, where he always arrived early and always sat near the pies. Such a portrait goes against the grain of the legend of the reclusive author. During these same years, Salinger's relations with his own children were a mixed bag, and here again Shields and Salerno offer some excellent insights. Salinger's daughter, Margaret, wrote a scathing memoir of her father's irresponsibility, titled *Dream Catcher*, while his son, Matthew, remained an acolyte, serving the master without bitterness or regret.

Perhaps the most delightful revelation of the book is that, as has been suspected for a long time, Salinger continued to pound away at his typewriter almost daily. After one of his stories appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1965, Salinger published nothing more in his lifetime (he died in 2010), but he kept writing—obsessively even, especially about his beloved fictive family the Glasses. Among the several volumes the author left unpublished, we are told, is one based on his memories of serving as an intelligence officer during the war, another about a character whose experiences of a failed early marriage mirror his own, and further tales of the Glass family.

Salinger's long silence was predicated on his interest in Vedanta Hinduism and other forms of mystical experience, as well as his desire to live an ascetic lifestyle. One friend recalls that his choice to quit publishing was "heavily influenced" by these beliefs, and among the pile of unpublished manuscripts is a complete volume on Vedanta Hinduism. So if we learn nothing else from *Salinger*, we at least know that there are important and serious volumes to be published posthumously and that the legend of a vault containing them is based on fact.

I have long held the view that Salinger is very underrated. My classroom experience indicates that the spiritual Salinger is still rocking the worlds of young people. Perhaps these new volumes, as they appear over the next decade or so, along with the general Salinger revival that seems to be occurring, will help us to recover and to appreciate in a far deeper way the spiritual life of the creator of Holden Caulfield and Seymour Glass.

BookMarks

Book of Hours: Poems

By Kevin Young
Knopf, 208 pp. \$26.95

The sudden death of a parent and years of smoldering grief that follow, the breathless anticipation of the birth of a child and years of awkward wonder that follow—these experiences are among the subjects of an attractive book of poems by an award-winning poet. Many of these poems were written out of moments when his nerves were frayed and confidence shaken. "Pietà" begins "I hunted heaven / for him. / No dice" and ends "Father, / find me when / you want. I'll wait." There are poems titled "Pilgrimage," "City of God," "Limbo," "Annunciation," "Blessings," and "Nativity." The poet presents simple, elegant compositions that hold the grace of ordinary shadowy days. The poem "Sorrow" begins "The dogs ate what we did / only days / later. Like angels / they roam the countryside / belonging to no one. / And to everyone."

North of Hope: A Daughter's Arctic Journey

By Shannon Huffman Polson
Zondervan, 256 pp., \$16.99

After Huffman Polson's father and stepmother were mauled and killed by a grizzly bear, she retraced their steps in the Arctic region. Completing their unfinished trek was not sufficient to heal her wounds. She sang Mozart's *Requiem* in the Seattle Symphony Chorus, led by Itzhak Perlman, and the *Requiem*, along with Kathleen Norris's *Dakota*, gave her a structure to process her grief. She also discovered *Kaddish*, Leon Wieseltier's account of the yearlong Jewish mourning process he followed upon the death of his father. Additionally, Huffman Polson found saving grace in discovering the writings of Walter Brueggemann on lament, and she came to see her own writing as lament—not writing what she thought she ought to write, but writing the truth.

Undaunted

D*ivergent* is every adolescent's dilemma magnified. Will Beatrice "Tris" Prior (Shailene Woodley) model her life on that of her parents or risk everything and strike out on her own? The core questions in this film are conventional: Who am I and where do I belong in the world? Yet Tris's dilemma is universal, and *Divergent* illuminates an age-old question in a new setting.

The film is set in postapocalyptic Chicago in a society with the motto "faction before blood." Each young person must make a public commitment to one of five factions that structure the society's social life: Abnegation, Erudite, Dauntless, Amity, and Candor. Once made, the decision is irrevocable and determines the course of one's life. Before they choose their factions, young people are given a neurological test that shows which faction best suits them.

When Tris takes the test, the woman administering it warns her to hide her results. "You're different," she tells Tris. "You don't fit into a category. They can't control you. They call it 'divergent.'" Tris decides to join the Dauntless, which means leaving her parents, modest and self-effacing members of Abnegation who model modest dress and self-effacing values in service to society.

The job of the Dauntless faction is to protect society. In her new life Tris wears black, jumps on and off of trains, gets tattoos, and enjoys raucous fun. Boys and girls sleep in the same room. New initiates compete to see who will make the grade. The protagonist even gives herself a new name, changing a formal "Beatrice" to the daring "Tris." She finds herself enjoying even the "decadence" of

a hamburger—something unknown to her until now.

While the premise is fictional, Tris's move from one world to another feels very familiar to anyone who has left home for a new life. Her transition from Abnegation to Dauntless is also like moving from the certainty of childhood faith to the restless questioning of adolescence. Abnegation modesty contrasts with Dauntless tattoos. Abnegation self-effacement contrasts with Dauntless competition. These contrasts could easily devolve into a too simple story about leaving a sheltered life behind, but Veronica Roth, the author of the book on which the film is based and a professed Christian, makes the ramifications of that move complex.

Divergent isn't a story of rigidity versus freedom or prudishness versus fun. Abnegation and the Dauntless are more than they seem to be. The Dauntless, whose job is to protect society, are not very good at protecting themselves. And

the selfless public face of Abnegation can mask family violence. Tris learns that both factions contain communal goodness as well as communal and individual evil. Neither of them is as simple or straightforward as the name implies.

Tris's task is not to leave virtue behind in the name of freedom, but to integrate the virtue of her past life with the virtue of her new one. She does not reject her parents either. She maintains a relationship with them, and their continued loving guidance gives her the strength to live her new life.

Tris's Dauntless trainer and love interest (Theo James) demonstrates Tris's goal of integration with tattoos he keeps hidden from a world divided into factions. He shows her his back, which is marked with the symbols of all the factions, and says, "I don't want to be just one thing. I can't be. I want to be brave, and I want to be selfless, intelligent, and honest and kind. Well, I'm still working on kind."



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The author is Beth Felker Jones, who teaches at Wheaton College in Illinois.

ATYPICAL: After a neurological test, Tris (Shailene Woodley, right) is told by the administrator that she does not fit into any single category and is therefore "divergent."



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by Philip Jenkins

Astonishing Assemblies

The United States has spawned many Christian denominations, some of which have gone on to thrive internationally. This year marks the centennial of one of the great success stories, the Assemblies of God. Not only have the Assemblies become a truly global church, but they have won far more followers outside their original homeland than within it.

The AG grew out of the famous Pentecostal revival that began on Los Angeles's Azusa Street in 1906. In 1914, local congregations met in Hot Springs, Arkansas, to form the denomination. Membership reached only 50,000 by the 1920s, but then it proceeded to grow rapidly. The Assemblies of God in the United States reached 1 million members by 1971, rising to 3 million today. By comparison, the Episcopal Church since the 1960s has contracted from 3 million members to 2 million.

The church's expansion in recent years is greater than we would think if we just counted signs explicitly using the Assemblies of God label. Many of the country's thriving megachurches are affiliated with the AG, but use a more generic label. That practice is not intended to deceive but rather recognizes a popular sense that traditional denominational labels are divisive and sectarian. My own working rule is that megachurch signs should usually read "Community Church (really Assemblies of God)."

It is on the global stage, though, that the AG has really boomed. From its earliest days, the church developed a far-reaching missionary operation driven by the common expectation of the imminent end times. In 1914, the denomination pledged itself to "the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen." By the late 1980s, the church recorded some 20 million "members and adherents" worldwide. Today, that number has reportedly risen to 66 million. Tens of thousands of congregations are organized under the World Assemblies of God Fellowship.

If the numbers are reliable, the AG family is the largest single Pentecostal denomination and high on the list of all Protestant churches. Those figures are open to argument, however. Church membership is a fairly well-defined category, but what exactly is an adherent? The denomination uses the term for "persons who consider an AG church to be their church home," a category that leaves plenty of room for subjective decisions.

But even if we doubt specific numbers, the trends are not in doubt, particularly in regard to the church's shift to the Global South. In official statistics, those 3 million AG followers in the United States are overwhelmed by 28 mil-

lion in Latin America and the Caribbean and 16 million in Africa.

Brazil offers a dramatic story of growth. Pentecostalism in that country traces its history to several separate missionary efforts around 1910—an Italian-American venture in São Paulo and a mission in Belém by two Swedish Americans, Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren. In 1918, the Scandinavian mission coalesced into the *Assembléia de Deus*.

Despite several schisms over the years, the various successor groups now boast 12 million believers, and their political influence is substantial. Every Sunday, more people attend AG churches in the greater São Paulo area than in the whole United States.

Although Berg and Vingren are scarcely known in the United States, they have left a rich memory in their adopted land. When the Brazilian church celebrated its centennial in 2011, the two men were feted as heroic pioneers.

The AG also has a powerful presence in Asia, chiefly through megachurches that do not explicitly bear the AG label. These include Australia's important Hillsong Church, with its widely popular hymns and Christian music. In south-

ern India, Chennai's New Life Church claims a membership running into the tens of thousands. So do the Full Gospel and Bethel churches in Bangalore.

Korean affiliates include Seoul's astonishing Yoido Full Gospel Church, founded by David Yonggi Cho. For a while, this church regularly held the record as the world's largest single congregation—but sheer weight of numbers demanded the creation of multiple satellite churches. Although Cho has recently faced serious legal problems over tax evasion, his church continues to boom. Yoido today claims some 900,000 members.

Throughout Christian history, denominations that emerged in one nation or region progressively lost their original identity as they attracted support farther afield. That was the story of the earliest apostolic church and, in later eras, of a group like the Methodists, who had English roots. There is nothing new about the AG growing far beyond its original territory. What is stunning is the pace of change: from tens of thousands of (mainly) Americans in 1914 to tens of millions of believers today, drawn from across the globe.

Philip Jenkins recently wrote The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade.

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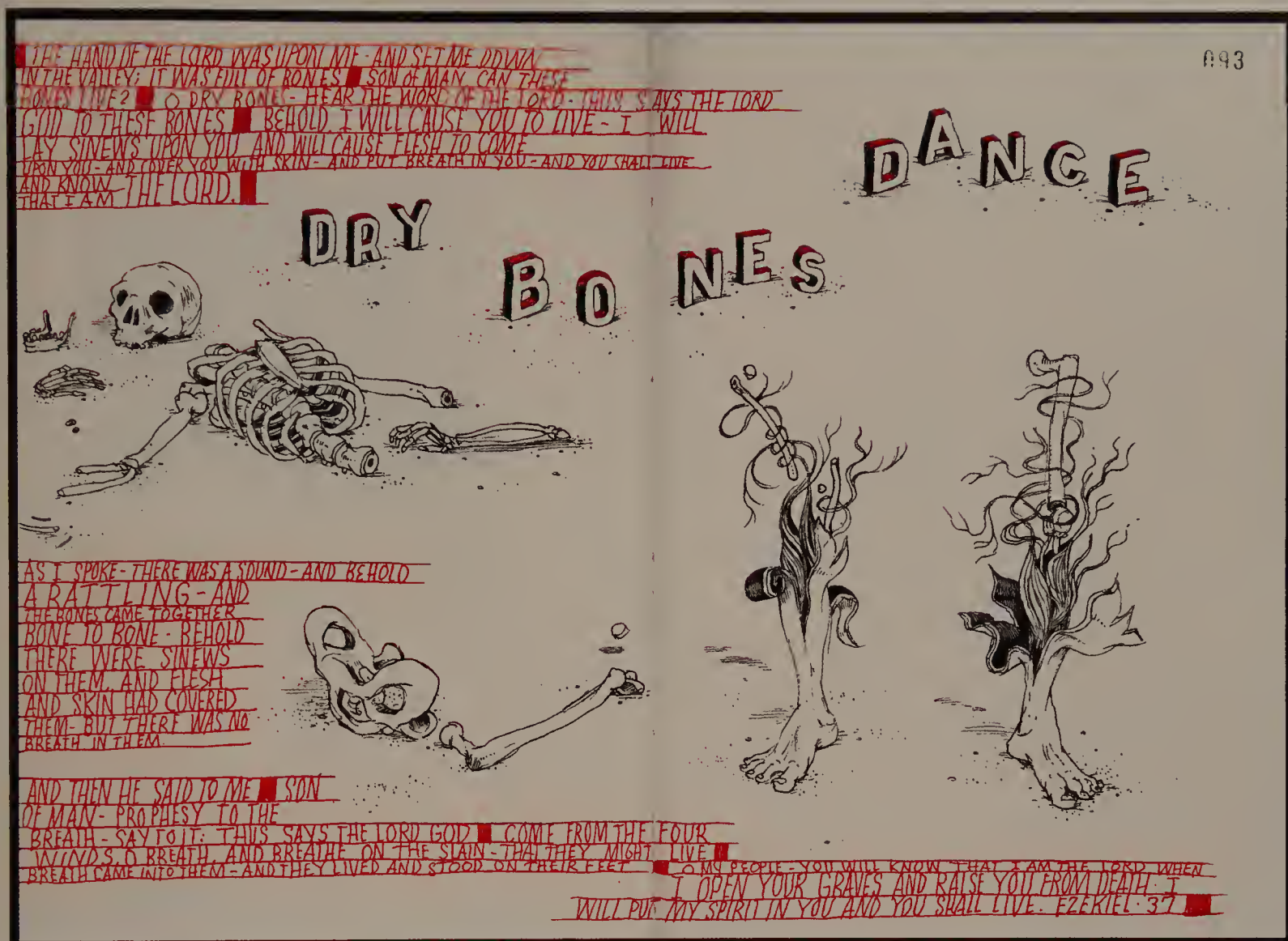
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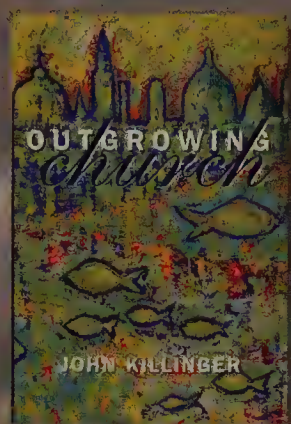
Selection from *Drawings in Church*, vol. 3, by John Hendrix

John Hendrix's work has appeared in a variety of publications, from children's books to *Rolling Stone* and the *New Yorker*. He has also produced a series of "drawing in church" sketches, created during worship services at his Presbyterian church. "As the preacher climbs behind the pulpit, I open my sketchbook and uncap my pen. I respond to what I hear and coax an image out of the language and concepts of faith, ritual, and liturgy." Hendrix is a professor of design and illustration at Washington University in St. Louis.

Art selection and comment by Lil Copan, a painter and editor in Boston.

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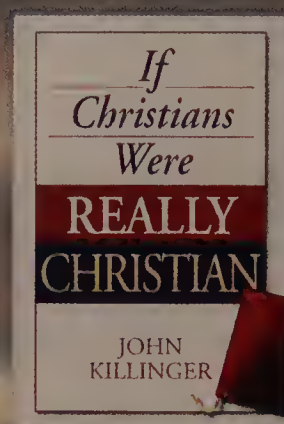
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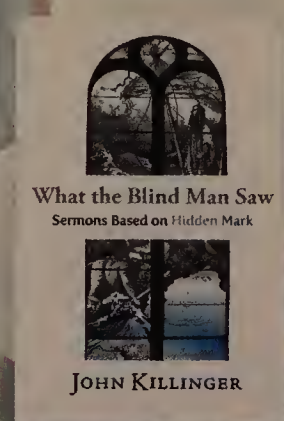
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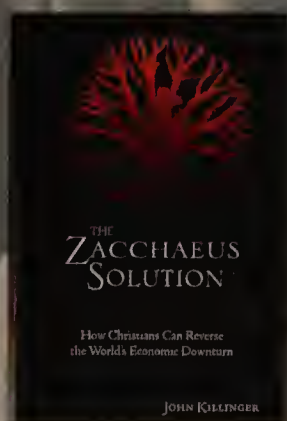


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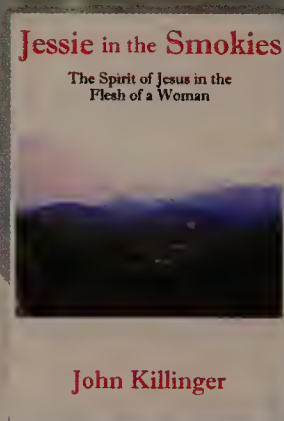
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